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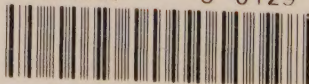
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CUPID'S PUPILS

From Courtship to Honeymoon,

432

BEING THE RECOLLECTIONS OF A PARISH CLERK

WHO ASSISTED AT

TEN THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED MARRIAGES! AND
GAVE AWAY ELEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY BRIDES!!

At St. Nicholas's Gt. Yarmouth



London

C. ARTHUR PEARSON LIMITED

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PREFACE

THIS book must not be deemed a work of fiction, drawn from the imagination; but be accepted as a record of realities that passed under the notice of the writer. Upon the truthfulness of the statements recorded in its pages the reader may rely. Words that have been uttered, and deeds that have been performed by excited persons, when passing through a momentous crisis of their lives, are given; and many of them will be found both strange and amusing. There has been no desire or need to exaggerate. On the contrary, many curious incidents have been omitted that might have been introduced.

It has fallen to the lot of few persons to be favoured with such ample opportunities as those enjoyed by the writer of witnessing the peculiar eccentricities that have been imported into the

marriage ceremony and its accessories by nervous and unlettered individuals. The ten thousand marriages attended by the author yielded an abundance of incidents worthy of observation, and selections of the more noticeable will be found in the following pages.

E. J. L.

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SECTION I

COURTSHIP

“Me thynke I hear ye voyce of my beloved ; lo, there commeth he hoppynge vpon the mountaynes, and leapyng over ye lytle hilles.”—*Solomon's Song*, chap. ii. ; Cranmer's Bible, Ed. 1541.

COURTSHIP, as usually conducted, has been declared by an American lady to consist principally of sighs and smiles, good clothes, evening promenades, carriage drives, presents, jealousies, fears and tears, all well seasoned with unwholesome flattery, and mystically adorned with the moonshine of deception ; and pronounced by her to be a myth, a bubble, an air-castle, great in appearance, but in reality nothing, and worse than nothing—a sandbar, instead of a rock on which to build the matrimonial structure : so shallow and defective, that

it really affords but little opportunity for the accomplishment of the end in view. After years of such frivolous courtship, the parties often know as little of each other's true character as they did before.

Her advice is to court in the day-time. But if you are unable to do so in the day-time, do it in the evening, and go home early ; and do not always have special evenings set apart for the interview, as the young lady would then know just what to expect, and be prepared in a good dress, and waiting with her sweetest smiles. And for the sake of a change, visit her in her home at unexpected times, and you may possibly see sights of which you had never dreamed. One such occasional visit is worth more than a dozen when expected. Young maidens should become domesticated, and learn from their mothers how to keep house, so as to become fitted for the duties of married life. It is well enough for young women to be accomplished in fancy work, to practise music, and entertain their lovers, but they will find when married that husbands must be sustained as well as

entertained ; that however charming the work or the music may be, they will not have good-natured husbands unless they have good food to eat. If the wife is not informed upon these important matters, and can neither prepare a meal nor direct its preparation, the husband may have to give her a sharp lesson, advising her to cook in the same manner that his mother did : until the wife resents, and tells him sharply that he had better go and live with his mother if her cooking suits him so well. But as cooking is not courting, we pass on.

When the inevitable descent from theoretical platforms into the realities of daily life takes place, it is found that courtship, like many other sterner matters, must, in its method and details, depend very much upon surrounding circumstances ; and that it is quite out of the question to define strict rules and regulations for its guidance. Only general hints may be given ; details must conform in each instance to the conditions in which the two lovers find themselves placed at the time.

A lady of forty was still a spinster, hopeful,

if not expectant. At length a letter reached her that assured her, after all, there really was somebody both willing and desirous to have her. It was from an individual who had never seen her, but who was satisfied with what he had heard respecting her, and unreservedly offered to make her his wife. Copts and Mahommedans were often engaged to be married without having had a previous interview, and why should not some good Christians be? The courtship thus strangely commenced progressed, and they were married on All Fools' Day.

Lengthened courtships are not always crowned with success. There are ladies who indulge in strong objections to a prolonged wooing. A certain young lady had enjoyed a three years' courtship with a young man who still believed her to be faithful to him. Another suitor having made an offer of immediate marriage, she cast her old lover aside, attached herself at once to her new acquaintance, and their banns were immediately published. Proclamation had been made once in church before

the rejected lover knew that he had been supplanted. When the news reached him he was loth to believe it, and a messenger was sent to inquire. It was then seen how perfidiously the young woman had acted. After giving her heart to a new lover, she had actually accepted a present from the former, who had sent it to her from a distant town.

An instance may be given of a similar character, but one not quite so reprehensible. A young woman, after a courtship of several years' duration with a youthful swain, listened to the alluring voice of another charmer. True, the old lover was dilatory ; possibly he was copying the example of one Robert Phillips, of Withington, near Hereford, who was married at eighty to Miss Anne Borrdler, aged near eighty, after a courtship of sixty years, "the marriage having been postponed in courtesy to some relations who disapproved the match."

Young men as well as maidens sometimes prove fickle-minded, and transfer their affections in an abrupt manner. An instance of

this character was given by one who had kept company with a young woman several years. He suddenly discovered some one who pleased his fancy better, and then cast aside his old friend, as he would a rejected garment. With his new acquaintance, he found that three months' courtship was quite sufficient preparation for marriage. Young persons of either sex who pursue a course of this character often find, to their sorrow, that they have made a grievous mistake, realising when too late that they have thrown away a sweet apple, and picked up a hard, sour crab.

As courtships sometimes terminate abruptly, so, in like manner, some are entered upon unexpectedly. It was thus with the couple we will term A. and B. Both were on pleasure bent, and in a compartment of a carriage in an excursion train, when they first met. The eyes of A. soon fell admiringly upon B. Her neat and comely appearance and pleasant deportment secretly won his admiration. He whispered in the ear of a gentleman friend who accompanied him, "That's the woman for my

wife!" A pleasant correspondence followed, and an engagement that terminated in three months in a marriage. Happy is the wooing that is not long in doing!

Mary Ann's courtship was one of the briefest. She was a widow. The gentleman who courted her was a widower. Finding herself stranded within the walls of a Workhouse, and there realising that much of life's poetry had departed, Mary Ann, being under middle age, and strong and active, could not rest satisfied in company with so many of life's failures, but wished to make an honourable escape from them. She inserted an advertisement in a paper asking, not for a husband, but for footing in a family as housekeeper. The eye of Arthur, a lonely widower, was arrested—the announcement interested him. He came to see her, liked her, and a few days after his visit sent her a postal order for half a crown to pay for the publication of their banns. The marriage was solemnized on the Sunday after the threefold publication.

B. was a sprightly young sailor. Bound on

one occasion for Sweden, the vessel entered its destined haven after a successful voyage. Whilst in port, B. broke one of his arms, and had to secure the attendance needed under such untoward circumstances. Going ashore, he finally decided to stay at a café. He was well cared for and his wants assiduously attended to by a young woman, aged twenty-one, who not only waited upon him but manifested so much sympathetic kindness that the young Englishman's attention was drawn towards her. He gradually became more and more interested in her, and before leaving gave her an offer of marriage that was cheerfully accepted, and, when the opportunity came, gladly revisited the distant shore, where his beloved Swede was eagerly awaiting his arrival, quite ready to cast in her lot with his.

Spinsters on the shady side of forty are apt to imagine that the outlook matrimonial has become for them anything but bright; consequently prejudices, whims, and fancies that were allowed to prevail in the heyday of youth then undergo considerable modification and

correction. Opportunities for marriage that formerly would have been promptly dismissed with scorn¹ are then fondly listened to.

A certain lady of forty-two became attached to a widower, eighteen years her senior, and wished to be married to him, but he made little response even at the time when she had progressed so far in the matter as to authorise the publication of the banns of marriage. The precariousness of her position was made known by her to the parish clerk, when she said, "I don't know whether we shall get through it; I can't get the gentleman in the mind to come with me." Three months' further drill were required to bring this gentleman "to the sticking point" before her perseverance was crowned with success.

It is anything but a good omen when a couple first meet in a public-house, and, while

¹ "How forward these men are! I think, child, we kept up our dignity. Any girl, however inexperienced, knows how to accept an offer, but it requires a vast deal of address to refuse one with proper condescension and disdain. I used to practise it at school with the dancing master!"—*The Lady of Lyons*, Act i., Scene i.

tippling, become attractive to each other. It was in this manner B. and H. met. Before leaving, the former foolishly blurted out that H. should be his wife; and, as a matter of course, she assented. Then, to convince each other they were not joking, they left the beer-shop and proceeded at once to the parish clerk, and had their names inserted in the banns book. Before the day ended, however, B. reflected upon what he had done, and lost no time before paying a second visit to the clerk to stay further proceedings by preventing the banns being published at all. He excused himself by stating he had ascertained since his former visit that H. was a bad woman. On discovering that the banns were not published on the following Sunday, the disappointed young woman called upon the clerk to inquire the cause of the omission, and there learned that her newly-acquired acquaintance (Mr. Back) had proved worthy of his name by turning his back upon her and, without further ado, backed out of the foolish agreement he had made.

Courting days with some persons have been rough and chequered times—bright for a while, then doomed to be shadowed. Such was the experience of our next couple. After progressing sufficiently along the loving path to be induced to have their banns published, a rupture took place, so that no marriage followed. In the following year the young woman had succeeded in obtaining another lover, and with him also the wooing reached the publication of banns stage. Failure again befel her, the young man being drowned before the day fixed for the marriage. By the end of eighteen months not only had her tears dried, but the differences that had arisen between her and her former lover were so thoroughly healed that they had the publication of their banns renewed. Again a hitch occurred; again they paused; and once more this unfortunate young woman was disappointed.

When E. was a lively, if not to ordinary beholders a lovely, spinster of forty-six, she received an offer of marriage from a widower.

He was an active, wiry little fellow, of seventy-four years' experience. The marriage was solemnized, and when about to pay the fees this bridegroom, so full of vigour, determination, and years, was found to be full of everything but money. "I'm short of cash," he said, and had to borrow from his friends in the vestry, to raise sufficient to satisfy the claims of the minister and clerk.

SECTION II

GIVING NOTICE FOR THE PUBLICATION OF BANNS

“ At last such grace I found, and meanes I wrought,
That I that lady to my spouse had wonne :
Accord of friends, consent of parents sought,
Affiance made, my happinesse begonne.”

SPENSER, *Faërie Queene*.

WEDGWOOD, in his Dictionary of Etymology, says that the primitive meaning of the word “banns” seems to have been a summons to the army. In the beginning of the feudal times all male inhabitants were in general required to give personal attendance when the king planted his banner in the field and sent round a notice that his subjects were to join him against the enemy. Now the calling out of this public force was called *bannire in hostem*, *bannire in exercitum*, *populum in hostem*

convocare bannire exercitum. In Layamon we constantly find the expression, "he bannede his forde"—he assembled his host. The expression seems to arise from *bann*, in the sense of standard, flag, ensign. The raising of the king's banner marked the place of assembly, and the primitive meaning of *bannire* was to call the people to the *bann* or standard. The term was then applied to summoning on any other public occasion, and thence to any proclamation, whether by way of injunction or forbiddal. Thus the word acquired the sense of proclamation; extant in Spanish and Italian, *bando*, and in the English banns of marriage.

Dr. Nicholls derives the word "bann" from the barbarous Latin word *bannum*, *bandum*, or from *bannire*, which signifies to put out such an edict or proclamation. It came into use about the seventh or eighth century, when the Latin tongue was vitiated by the intermixture of a number of Gothic, Teutonic, and Gaulish words. For we find the use of it in the Capitulars of Charles the Great, in the year of our Lord, 802 : "Bannimus firmiter ut nemo

amplias faciat," &c. ("We publish it as a ban, that no one hereafter," &c.).

Before a marriage is solemnized in church, unless a licence has been obtained, banns are directed to be published in the church, that is, public proclamation must be made to the congregation, concerning the design of the parties that intend to come together. The care of the Church to prevent clandestine marriages is as old as Christianity itself. For Tertullian tells us, that in his time all marriages were accounted clandestine that were not published beforehand in the church, and were in danger of being judged adultery and fornication. And by several ancient constitutions of our own Church, it was ordered that none should be married before notice should be given of it in the public congregation on three several Sundays. (Mant, on the Book of Common Prayer.)

The design of the Church in publishing banns is to be satisfied whether there be any just cause or impediment why the parties so asked should not be joined together in matrimony.

In the time of the Commonwealth (August,

1653) an Ordinance was enacted, "That after the 29th September, 1653, all persons who shall agree to be married within the commonwealth of England, shall deliver in their names and places of abode, with the names of their parents, guardians, and overseers, to the registrar of the parish where each party lives, who shall publish the banns in the church three several Lord's days after the morning service: or else *in the market-place* three several weeks successively, between the hours of eleven and two, *on a market day*, if the party desire it. The registrar shall make out a certificate of the due performance of one or the other, at the request of the parties concerned, without which they shall not proceed to marriage." The publicity of the market-place was accepted by a few persons. In our own times lovers of notoriety are to be found.

On the other hand, even when complying with the quiet and more decent method adopted by the Church, much nervous embarrassment has been shown by many persons. On introducing themselves to the parish clerk for the

purpose of authorising the publication of their banns, couples begin to feel the reality of the step they are about to take. This nervousness has caused many *lapsus linguæ* to occur, and many amusing incidents to take place. A young woman, on being asked how long her lover had resided in the parish, replied, "A year and eighteen months." A young spinster, when requested to sign the entry then made in the banns book, asked whether she was to sign her *maiden* name. Some young ladies have quite forgotten the names of the gentlemen they were to marry, and were unable to give them when asked. Some have unintentionally mentioned names of young men other than those they meant to give. A youth named William, being asked whether he had any other Christian name, answered, "Yes—Billy." A widower of thirty-nine said he was "nine and forty." Another, who was fifty-two, said "thirty-two." A widow, twenty-six years old, said, with much gravity, she was "sixteen," and one who had seen but twenty-eight summers said she was "eighty-three"! A young

spinster, instead of saying, as she intended, that she was born before wedlock (which, her mother declared to the clerk the next day, was absolutely false), said, "I was married before mother." A young man, when asked the name of his sweetheart's father, replied, "He's dead at present." Another, being unable to answer a similar question, his sweetheart afterwards sent a fashionable-looking note stating that her father was "diseased."

(a) BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION.

To take the first step in any important matter usually costs an effort. In matters matrimonial it is especially found to be so. Some young men, instead of proving themselves equal to the emergency, often shirk the duty, and allow their sweethearts to test their intrepidity by arranging for the publication of the banns without their presence ; while others bravely accompany them to the clerk's office, and then remain outside. An examination of one hundred consecutive entries in the banns-book, shows that 14 notices were given by

expectant bridegrooms, 58 by expectant brides, and 28 couples attended together. With some of them a third person appeared, who was utilised for introductory purposes. Some couples when by themselves have, on entering, stood perfectly silent, waiting for each other to make an opening statement. Some have commenced by laughing; others, simply by grinning, until brought to the business point. One of the youths who ventured alone, said, "Now I've come, I don't know what to say." Others have introduced themselves, or have been introduced, in the following manner :—

"S'pose you can guess what we are come arter."

"Come to do a little business; this good lady and me is going to form a nuptials."

"We've come to put in the sybbrits."¹

"Come to have our names arxed out."

"Come to give myself away like the rest of 'em."

¹ *Sybbrit* is said to be derived from A.S. *syb*, akin, and *byrht*, to bruit, divulge.

"Just want to put our names down for a silly affair for life."

"We've come to commit suicide—I mean, to put in the banns of marriage."

"We want this young lady to be prayed for to-morrow."

"She's coming to do with her tongue, what she can't undo with her teeth."

"We two want to be made one."

"We're going to join in *Medlock*."

"This young lady wants to enter names for a hanging match."

"This young lady wishes to throw her life away."

"Come to see if you can do a kindness for me."

"This young lady wants to come for better for worse. If it should prove for worse, I'll bring her back again."

Some of these interesting individuals who came unattended by friends, found it advisable to introduce themselves in writing.

A youth of eighteen sent his sister with a paper requesting his banns to be "Pubalated."

“Please Sur will you kindly Pubalate the bands of R. of this Parash to E. of this Parash to Marry I remain R.”

The same method was adopted by S., whose note ran :—“S—— I—— request their Banns to be Published on Sunday next Being the twenty-forth day of this month at the Parish church Booth Parties living in the Parish.”

A widow when about to make a third matrimonial venture, fortified herself with a note she had engaged a friend to write for her. In the document she was described as “Miss Mary Ann H. Born at B. Widow age 61.” During the interview “Miss Mary Ann” said, “It don’t seem as if I can keep a husband long; this will be my third. I was married to the last twenty-eight years; and to the first, only three. I’d rather keep single, but I’m getting old, and I want somebody to work for me.”

Jemima did not require the assistance of a note; twice before she had passed a similar experience; she now presented herself with a smiling countenance, and instead of speaking

gave a significant look. On the clerk inquiring what he could do for her, she said, "Daresay you can guess. You're going to pray for me to-morrow, at least the clergyman is. Ah! I've lost two good husbands, and been a 'widder' ten years, and think it is time to have somebody to care for me. Don't you remember my last marriage fourteen years ago? Don't you remember my bringing a basket to church with me, because I didn't want people to know; and then you gave me away?"

(b) SUPPLYING INFORMATION—NAMES.

Two systems are in operation for receiving the necessary information required of the contracting parties. One is, to obtain from them, at the first interview, only the information requisite for the due publication of the banns, leaving the remaining details that are required in the columns of the marriage register until the time of marriage. The other method is, to receive at one and the same time all the information that will be required. The latter

plan is really the best ; as the details are more likely to be given accurately in the quietude of the preliminary visit, than amid the excitement of the marriage. It is also the most expeditious for the wedding-party, as the entry can then be made in the two register books beforehand, and only the signatures be required in the vestry, to make them complete.

The information required from candidates for holy matrimony is really very little ; the questions are few and easily answered ; yet it has been most astonishing to see the perplexity they have caused in the minds of many nervous individuals.

A young woman stated that the name of the man she was to marry was " Darling," although his name was " Darn," and " Darling " he was said to be in the banns book until the error was subsequently rectified.

Hannah, a spinster forty-four years of age, found herself in a similar condition. Presently after leaving, she returned with her lover's name written on paper, and it was then found

that both the Christian and the surname she had given were wrong.

Ellen, when asked the name of her future husband, replied, "I'm sure I can't tell ye, sir, it's such a curious name, so I asked him to write it down." The name was found to be "Cornelius Thomas."

We will now introduce a widower, who was approaching his three score years and ten, and was still on "business" bent. "I want a little business done by you," he said to the clerk. He wished to arrange for a marriage by banns; "although," he added, "some people make a derision of banns." What good thing is there in the world that has not at some time or other been derided? In giving information he progressed satisfactorily until the name of his lady was required. Then came an ominous pause, accompanied by looks of distress. After much reflection, he apostrophised musingly—"Lydia, ah! Lydia. Lydia, that's it!" Satisfactory so far. But his difficulties were only partly surmounted. Lydia was sufficient for him; the name awoke his sensibilities, warmed his

liveliest emotions, and brought *her* in all her attractiveness mentally before him. But Lydia, without a surname, would not personise her to the congregation. "Lydia" to that assembly would be a *vox et præterea nihil*. Consequently he was requested to state the Lydia he meant—to mention which of all the Lydias in the world he had wisely chosen. Signs of mental disturbance were again exhibited. "Her name? That's gone from my mind. Why, dear me! For the world I can't think of it. Ugh! Well, that's a fancy! Got it at my tongue's end. Got my mind full of names, and can't think of it." As it persistently stayed at his tongue's end, and declined to be separated from the crowd of names among which it had become inextricably mixed, he said, "Leave room for it, and go on." This we did after congratulating him on not having forgotten his own name. When all but Lydia's surname had been given, and still further reflection proved useless, he was advised to procure it written upon paper. "That'll be the best way," he replied. "P'r'aps I may

think of it as I go along. Isn't it strange?" "Very strange indeed. How long have you known her?" "I've known her for years, in the manner of speaking." How delightful it would have been to have been present at the interview when he asked his Lydia what her surname was! After a time he returned bearing a used envelope, with "Mrs. S." written upon it. Placing it in the clerk's hand, he said, with a gratified look, "Singular! Her name is S., that's easy to think of; but I'll tell you how it was. I saw the name of Mann on a door, and I couldn't get the name of Mann out of my head."

Instead of attending to his own matrimonial matters, Arthur engaged the services of his mother to pay the requisite visit to the clerk. When asked her son's name, she said she knew that he had two Christian names, but for the life of her she could not remember what the second one was. In her difficulty she said, "I'll go and ask his uncle." She did so, and then ascertained that the second name was entirely different from the one she had imagined.

It is not often found that a young woman in decent circumstances is ignorant of the orthography of her lover's surname, but it was so with E. She was accompanied by her mother when arranging matters with the clerk ; and when the young man's name was given there was good reason for doubting the accuracy of this statement. To satisfy the clerk, they sought information in the churchyard, gravely consulted a family gravestone, and found themselves corrected by the silent monitor.

Laura and her young man called to request that their banns might be published. When it came to the turn of the former to furnish information, she, on being asked her name, appropriated the surname she was expecting to bear. The young gentleman instantly turned towards her, and said, correctively, "You ain't—yet!" With crimson blushes she then gave her own name.

Susannah's young man's parents presented him with three Christian names, and the last of the three being a good, usable, work-a-day

one, he brought that into everyday use, and had forgotten the others. When he was asked his name, "Richard," was the prompt reply. "Have you any other name beside Richard?" With reluctance he said, "Yes, my name is Gabriel Theophilus." "Oh, well, we must have them all; Richard Gabriel Theophilus?" "No, that isn't it. It's Gabriel Theophilus Richard." The writer could have told poor Gabriel that he once knew three children of one family who shared the following names between them:—Algernon, Ferdinand, Pendered, Alfred, Telemachus, Columban, McKenna, Rosetta, Hall, Aspasia.

Rosanna, a widow, was anxious to have her banns published, and called upon the clerk to tell him so. "My young man is not here," she said, "and I don't know his name or his age." On the following day Rosanna called again, having in the meantime found a friend who knew the name required. "Well, what is his name?" "Shadrach John Christmas," was the reply.

(c) SUPPLYING INFORMATION—AGES.

One of the items required being the age of each person, some amusing little episodes have arisen in connection therewith.

In the year of our Lord, 1878, a lively couple who had ripe experience determined to make a fresh start in life (the lady having previously enjoyed a twofold share of connubial bliss), called upon the clerk, in excellent spirits, to arrange the necessary preliminaries. On his asking the widow her age, she said, "Well, let's see:" and for a time she was engaged in deep reflections upon the past. When the old gentleman who was to be her husband thought she had cogitated long enough, he playfully told her she ought to know. "Stop a moment," she replied; "in '46 I was twenty-two. There's '56, and '66, and '76." In continuation of her calculation, the frisky prospective bridegroom added, "And there's '86," although that year was in the future. After this slight interruption she resumed her arithmetic in the chronological review of her past life. "I was married in '46 and then I was twenty-two; I've had two

husbands." Here the calculation was again disturbed by the gentleman chiming in, "She's going to adopt Henry the Eighth's plan: she'll bury me too." His remark was rewarded with the rejoinder, "Well, if I nurse you up, and do my best, what does it matter?"

When John was asked his age on his last birthday, he replied, "I can't tell you within a month or two."

A little nervous wool-gathering was going on in Hannah's mind when supplying information preparatory to her marriage. She said the age of her young man Walter was fourteen. The clerk, believing she meant twenty-four, exclaimed in a tone of surprise, "*Fourteen?*" Looking calmly at him, she replied, "Yes, fourteen." Further signs of astonishment were shown, and the question, "*Fourteen?*" again asked, before she became conscious that she had made a mistake. She then corrected herself and said he was seventeen! Her own tale of years was eighteen.

Upon Susannah's head were honourable in-

dications that she was drawing towards the autumn of life. When asked her age, she replied, "Twenty-eight." As this did not tally with her appearance, the clerk hesitated to accept it. Susannah, upon reflection, tacked on twenty more years, making the total forty-eight.

Charles, on hearing his Emily state that she was forty-two, more carefully considered his own age, and found he had long since passed his thirty-first milestone. "I was twenty-two when I married; then I was married twelve years, and my wife has been dead eight years, that makes me forty-two."

(d) SUPPLYING INFORMATION—PARENTS.

When a young woman was asked the name of her intended husband's father, she said, "I'm sure I can't tell ye, as he had so many fathers." In explaining this enigma, she said, "He was very young when his father died, and his mother married again and again."

Another young woman's extreme nervous-

ness caused her to give extraordinary answers to the questions put to her. When asked where her parents were living, she said, "*Some* in ——" (a neighbouring town) "and some here." "Then how many parents have you?" "Oh, a good many."

Samuel, when asked with whom he resided, answered, "With my fathers and mothers."

When Mary was asked the name of her intended husband's father, her reply was, "He's an offering." By the remark she wished the clerk to understand that the father was dead and the young man an orphan.

(e) SIGNING THE BANNS BOOK.

Each entry made in the banns book for the purpose of having banns published in church, must, of course, to be complete and to serve as an authority, be signed by the parties concerned or by the person acting for them. But in one or two instances blunders have, by some means, occurred in names, and persons have shown inclination to lay the blame upon the

clerk, instead of bearing it themselves ; he, as a precautionary measure, required the names of both persons to be attached to each entry, that the names he had entered therein might thus be confirmed. Some, on hearing this, have replied, "I can only write my own name, I don't know how to write his." Louisa could write her surname, but not her Christian name. Emma could write her Christian name, but being nervous, spelt it, "Emam."

(f) PAYING FEES FOR THE PUBLICATION OF
BANNS.

The sum that has to be paid at the time of ordering the publication of banns is two shillings and sixpence, *i.e.*, one shilling and sixpence for the minister, and one shilling for the clerk. One could scarcely have imagined that so simple a matter would have afforded scope for the display of singularities, but such has been the case. One ecstatic individual found much pleasure in paying the amount in coppers ; another, in threepenny pieces ; a third, apparently, with the miscellaneous con-

tents of a money-box. Some have been able to produce only a portion of the amount required ; and some adventurers have presented themselves with no money at all.

When about to have his banns proclaimed, George presented himself with empty pockets. His being a teetotaler seemed thoroughly to convince him of the propriety of so doing. When told the amount to be paid was half a crown, he was not in the least disconcerted, but simply stated that he didn't carry money about with him, as he was "a teetotaler."

Frederick tried to be funny over the payment of the banns fee. When bringing forth his purse he put on a comical kind of smile, and said, "Pay half a crown to take a woman to maintain her ; I can't make that out."

Unquestionably bad taste, if not actual bad feeling, was shown by a widower, sixty-six years of age, over the payment of this fee. Before he parted with the half a crown, and while retaining it in his hand, he directed his

intended wife's attention to the fact ; wishing her to note that it was on her account he had to pay. He said to her, " See what you have cost me already." Her response was a silent, sickly-looking smile.

(g) COINCIDENCES.

On a day in October, 18—, a young lady named Short made a communication that convinced the parish clerk she had no wish to remain Short much longer. Miss Short was followed the very same day by Miss Long, who, although seven years younger than Miss Short, was equally resolved to be Long no longer than she could possibly help.

The coincidences connected with two young couples who were married at the same time, were singular. The bridegrooms were both twenty-one years of age, and were widowers ! They had the same occupation, but were strangers to each other. Their brides were both of the same age, being just eighteen. The bridegrooms' intellectual powers were

about equal. One told his bride that he was taking her "to love or to cherish," and the other said he was taking his "to have and behold."

SECTION III

PROCLAIMING THE BANNS

“*Amel.* Cleophila hath played the churchman’s part ;
I’ll not forbid the bans.

“*Men.* Are you consented ?”

FORD, *The Lover’s Melancholy*, Act v. sc. i.

IN the first Prayer Book of Edward VI., 1549, the first Rubric of the Marriage Service was as follows : “ First the banns must be asked three several Soondaies or holye dayes, in the seruice tyme, the people beeyng presente after the accustomed maner.” It was afterwards enacted that “ Banns of Matrimony shall be published upon Sundays only.” The form of words now used in the publication of banns was inserted at the revision of the Liturgy in the year 1662.

The design of the Church in publishing these banns is to be satisfied whether there be

any just cause or impediment why the parties, so asked, shall not be joined together in matrimony.

In years gone by, young women were more inclined to yield to superstitious prejudices than they now are. There was amongst them a strong objection to hearing their own banns proclaimed in church. Jeffreson is of opinion that the humbler people of the rural districts think that the young woman betrays a lack of maidenly coyness, who has the hardihood to hear her banns asked in church. In their disapprobation of the damsel who behaves thus boldly, they predict, and perhaps wish, evil to her and her progeny. A Worcester-shire girl, some years since, told a friend that she would not attend church and hear the publication of her own banns, lest by so doing she should bring the curse of dumbness upon her offspring. One of the girl's female friends had insulted social opinion by hearing herself "asked out at church," and in due course had six children, all of whom were deaf and dumb.

Very few minds are disturbed with such

terrible forebodings now. Sometimes couples have both been present at the third asking of their banns ; and the people residing in their neighbourhood have, in after years, found by experience that their children were anything but dumb.

On a Sunday morning in the year 1867, the writer presented to the clergyman the names of fifty-eight couples for publication ; and he did not fail to notice the interesting fact that amongst the Christian names of these were the following of scriptural origin — Noah, Job, Isaac, Rebecca, Joseph, Benjamin, Samuel, David, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Azariah, James, John, Thomas, Phœbe, Lydia, and Diana. In the surnames of these people were Woods and Timbers ; Brooks, Wells, and a Pitcher ; a Hall, a Lodge, and a Key ; a Staff and a Mace ; Greaves and a Thorne. It was winter, and John (not Jack) Frost was there. The great festival of the year was drawing nigh, so John Christmas, John Lamb, and Elizabeth Mutton were all appropriately present.

On a Sunday when the names of only twenty couples were recited by the minister to the congregation, the persons who gave due attention to the pronouncement had the opportunity of knowing that Hymen's darts had been indulging in such strange eccentricities, that a young man had been led to set his affections upon a Lamb; another upon a Goate; and a third upon a Pigg. Amongst the young ladies one had become enamoured with a Lark, and a second with a Cockrill.

A few more eccentricities of a similar character were confidentially made known to the congregation in the following year. It was asserted that an English girl wished to be married to a *Redman*, that a second intended to have an *Alabaster* husband, that a third became enraptured with a *Swann*, and that a fourth had set her heart upon a particular *Parish*. The decisions of the young men were, as a rule, more comprehensible, if we except the youth who had selected a *Wiseman* to be his wife. There was nothing remarkable in a bricklayer falling in love with a beautiful *Stone*,

in an economical young man selecting a *Taylor* for his wife, a selfish man determined to secure *Booty*, a *Fairweather* Sailor being more fond of *Bacon* than of the heaving billows, or a gentleman, angling with Cupid's tackle, catching a fine *Herring*.

An interesting coincidence of a somewhat unusual character happened in the publication of banns one Sunday morning. Amongst the names that were announced were those of two sisters for the third, two sisters for the second, and two sisters for the first time of asking. At the marriage of these six young maidens their names were recorded in consecutive entries in the register. A month later a Shepherd and three Lambs were amongst those who at the same time were making preparations for marriage.

SECTION IV

FORBIDDING THE BANNS

“And I, her husband, contradict your bans.”

Lear, Act v. Sc. iii.

THE impediments to lawful marriage in England are not numerous. Independent of impotency and of mental imbecility, which latter invalidates every engagement, they are, or were, only three: (1) A preceding marriage, or precontract¹ still existing; (2) Consanguinity or affinity, that is, relationship either by blood or marriage; and (3) In cases of minority, want of the consent of the parents or guardians.¹

¹ Precontract of marriage to another person was a disability. This, however, is now abolished; for no proceedings shall be had in any Ecclesiastical Court to compel marriage by reason of any contract. Want of age *was* a fatal defect, without consent of parents or guardians; but now the want of consent does not render the marriage invalid. (Geo. IV. c. 76.)

Against a man marrying his deceased wife's sister Bishop Jewell argues thus : "Though I am not forbidden by plain words to marry my wife's sister, yet I am forbidden by other words which by exposition are plain enough, for when God commands me that I shall not marry my brother's wife, it follows directly that He forbids me to marry my wife's sister. For between one man and two sisters, and between one woman and two brothers there is like analogy or proportion."

Respecting the marriage of persons under age, it has been enacted by a statute, that "no minister solemnising marriage between persons, both or one of whom shall be under the age of twenty-one years, after banns published, shall be punishable by ecclesiastical censures for solemnising such marriages without consent of parents or guardians, whose consent is required by law, unless he shall have *notice* of the dissent of such parents or guardians."

Concerning forbidding of banns, Wheatly says that the minister "is not to stop his proceeding, because any peevish or pragmatistical

Person, without just Reason or Authority, pretends to forbid him ; as is the case sometimes, when the Church-Wardens, or other Officers of the Parish, presume to forbid the publication of the Banns, because the Parties are *Poor*, and so like to create a charge to the Parish ; but *Poverty* is no more an impediment of Marriage than Wealth, "and the Kingdom can as little subsist without the Poor, as it can without the rich." Marriages are not forbidden in these days on account of the poverty of the persons.

Not having heard any banns publicly forbidden in church, the reader must not, however, imagine that such an event has altogether become a thing of the past. Many youngsters know by bitter experience that this happens sometimes, not usually, it is true, in the dramatic and sensational manner which found favour with our forefathers, when a parent, or some other person concerned, would rise up in the midst of a congregation, to the surprise of all present, and make known distinctly to the minister his or her will and determination in the matter, but in a better and quieter way by

calling either upon the minister or the clerk, and stating the case. When the latter has been selected as the channel of communication, and anything of a doubtful or difficult character has arisen, it has, of course, been immediately brought before the vicar ; but in most instances the objections were of an ordinary character, merely necessitating the withdrawal of the objected names from the list, in order that publication might cease.

Banns have been forbidden not only by irate parents but by individuals who had entered their names for publication. Some have found their minds so thoroughly changed in the matter that before any one else had an opportunity of interfering, before their names had been published at all—they have put a prohibition upon its being done.

In all outward seeming W. and M. were a loving couple when they invested half a crown to have their banns published. But before the triple announcement had been made in church, M. wrote beneath the entry, “i fordid theese Bands.”

A young lady, aged twenty-nine, was so matrimonially inclined as to enter her banns on Friday; and then, after the clock had struck eleven on Saturday night, she disturbed the initial slumbers of the clerk by repeated and impetuous applications of the knocker on his door, wishing to make known to him the decided change that had taken place in her affections towards James. From the height of a bedroom window she was advised to come the next morning before the service commenced, so that she might in a more reasonable manner state the case. On the morrow she wrote beneath the entry in the banns book, "I for bed these bands," adding her name, and stating that she had "had a few words with him."

Two days after Mary Ann's lover had taken the preliminary step in church requirements in preparation for marriage, she made it known that she did not wish the publication to be made. What she did wish, however, was to get possession of the half a crown her young man had paid. She preferred this to the

banns. But when she found there was no likelihood of the money reaching her pocket, she withdrew the prohibition, and allowed the banns to proceed. Happily for the young man no marriage followed.

R. and E. were quite eighteen each when they thought it was high time to enjoy the pleasures of married life ; its responsibilities did not in the least trouble their minds. When R.'s mother became aware of the steps they were thoughtlessly taking she called upon the clerk, and wrote beneath the entry in the lovers' book, "I for bid the benns Susannah—is mother."

The day after I. and H. had their names entered in the banns book, H. called to state that since the visit on the previous day "*his* wife had been after him." On being asked how long she had known him, she replied, "About four or five weeks."

After reflecting and forming fresh resolutions some individuals, instead of having a personal interview, have forbidden the banns by letter. Amongst such missives were the following :—

“Mr. Sir, I beg to inform you that I wish not for My Name to be asked in church to Morrow as I have cause to have it stop as My Name is John—you will remember the circumstance. I remain Yours Respectfully Mr. Clark.”

“Dear Sir, I has come to my Knowledge that the banns of marriage are being published between my Son A. And H. I write to forbid the banns my Son being under age and an apprentice and living with me at ——. Kindly inform me by return of Post if such is the Case. I remain ——.”

The young woman was cruelly kept in the dark. Nothing had been said to her about the prohibition until she called upon the clerk to give notice for the wedding to be solemnised the next morning. Then to her blank dismay she heard for the first time what the young man's father had done.

“Dear Sir having hird my sons name was aske in the parash Church in —— to be married to Egness —— I write to aske you if you will bee so kind as to Stop it as he is

not only 17 and i do not think he is old enouf
to understand the douty of a husband and
they have told you a Lye to say they Live in
—— for they live in —— i would have come
and seen You Myself only i am very hill and
not able to come out."

SECTION V

COMPLIANT PARENTS

“There’s nothing half so sweet in life
As love’s young dream.”—MOORE.

VACILLATING conduct towards children is never satisfactory. The father of A., on hearing that his son was seriously contemplating marriage, lost no time in bringing his restraining influence to bear upon the matter. Beneath the entry in the banns book he wrote, “I Forbid this marriage From Taken place as My Son is only 17 years of age.” His name and the date followed. Eleven weeks after this prohibition, the girl’s mother paid a visit of inquiry, and on ascertaining particulars she summed the matter up in this way : “A good job he did stop it for they are only like chickens.” Five weeks after this confirmatory verdict we

were surprised on receiving the father's withdrawal of his objection, and giving his consent to the marriage.

B. was an engaging young lady of eighteen, and had won the affections of a youth who rejoiced in being of age. In this attachment her father acquiesced. Thus encouraged, they prepared a home. Having thus far progressed, they entered their banns. At this stage her father intervened, and would not allow further progress to be made. During five months matters remained in this unsatisfactory condition, waiting for his ebullition of obstinacy to cool down. It at length gave way, and the following note was received: "Sir i am requested by my husband to inform you that he give his consent to his daughter—to be married as soon as convenient. Sined ——"

A few of these complaisant missives are now lying before us.

"Sir I give my son —— ascension to be married as twenty-one in January. Yours Truly ——"

Joyful acquiescence is clearly to be seen in the

redundancy of capitals the writer felt bound to make use of on this occasion : “ Sir I James —— Father of Lucy —— Sign By My Hand I Am Willing For Her To Be Married — James ——”

The parents of B., who was under age, resided in a village some miles distant. A letter was written to the father, asking him to allow his daughter to be married. He not being able to write, his wife replied for him, and in the pleasant missive she sent her daughter's lover we read the following : “ We have no objection to you being married if B. have no objections, all we hope you will be happy and comfortable, and keep truthful to one and the other.”

SECTION VI

ANXIOUS INQUIRIES

“Thou com’st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.”—SHAKESPEARE.

THE official position of the parish clerk in connection with marriages has occasionally induced cantankerous individuals to seek interviews, in order to unburden their troubled minds.

An indignant-looking man, standing at our door, inquired, “Do the Clerk of the Peace live here?” “No, he does not. Do you mean the Parish Clerk?” “I mean him that has to do with the church.” “Yes, he lives here, I am he; what is it you want?” “I come to axe you a question. Had you any marriage here yesterday, a young youth named I——?” “No, we had not.” Slightly mollified by the unex-

pected answer, he proceeded. "I'll tell you the reason I came to axe you. He ain't sixteen till the nineteenth of next month, and they suaded him." "Who?" "Why the gal's mother. And I think it's werry hard for a man to have another man's child brought under his roof. His mother is werry unhinged about it. I watched about arter him last night, and the night afore, and they see me, and they watched me about. I thought if I could hear his voice in their house, I'd a gone in; and if they had fastened the door, I'd a busted in and got him out; for I think it's werry hard, and he's only sixteen the nineteenth of next month."

A woman called to caution the writer against receiving, if he had not already received, the names of I. and E. for the publication of their banns. "He is my son, and he is only eighteen, and she is an old woman compared to him. They tell me she is fifty. I know she is older than me, and I'm the mother of nine. She is a married woman and her husband is living. She took up with my son three years ago, and now

they tell me they're going to be married. He lives there, and she takes his money. If you were to see the crib of a house she lives in, you'd never forget it!"

A young man, twenty-four years of age, accompanied by his father, called to inquire whether his own banns were being published. He said he had been told the evening before that they were, and until then he knew nothing about it. The entries in the banns book were examined, his name was found, and he saw at once that he had been rightly informed. The young woman whose name was linked with his own had given the order, and they had then been proclaimed twice. On being asked whether he knew this active young woman, he replied, "Oh, yes." "And you did not authorise her to have the banns published?" "Certainly not; I'm not prepared to marry her at present." Most young women are content to wait until after marriage before they attempt to take the reins. But this entry in the banns book was quite an object lesson to the young man; it showed distinctly that this young

person could not wait till then, but felt she must control affairs at once. It gave unmistakable evidence of her capabilities ; it proved further that she was incapable of keeping and adorning her rightful position. It also opened the young man's eyes, enabling him to form a truer estimate of her character than he had made before. Their next meeting must have been an interesting and memorable one. The advice she then received has, we hope, proved of practical utility to her ever since.

S. called upon the writer about two months after the banns had been published, to ascertain how much longer they would "stand good." Her young man was away from the town, and although she did not expect him to return until a few more weeks had past, she had begun to cherish secret misgivings as to his intentions to make her his wife, and she had been revolving in her mind whether it were possible to make him her husband, without his having any more to do with it. This designing little woman had fixed upon a plan that she thought might serve the purpose, and she then inquired of the clerk,

“If the marriage fees are paid would that do the same as if we were married?” that was, make them man and wife.

A young woman introduced herself by saying, “You see I’m a widow.” Her dress confirmed her statement. “There’s a man wants to marry me, and I have been told that he is a married man, and his wife does not live with him. I want you to look in your books to see whether it be so or not, because I don’t want to get with a married man. I want to know for certain, because he said when he comes home—he’s away now—he’ll put the banns in. One of my neighbours tells me that it was the talk of the place that he was married eleven years ago. I wish you would be so kind as to see.” The marriage register was searched, and there, about the time the rumour indicated, was found the entry.

A young man who was known to be “on the point” of marriage, was induced to call upon the clerk on April 1st, to ascertain whether some information that had been given him was reliable or not. He said, “I have been told

that instead of having the banns published I could have the names put on the church door for three days, by paying a little more." He found that whatever may be done in the revolutionary future, church doors were not being used for such a purpose at the present time.

A problem that disturbed the mind of M., a widow, twenty-six years of age, was, whether previously to her marriage with C. she should withdraw her wedding-ring from her finger, or let it remain there? As there is no law to rule the matter, widows are allowed to please themselves, and it is usually their custom to allow the first ring to retain the post of honour, and permit its successor to take second place.

When Mrs. —— was wishing to be married the third time, she visited the writer, who happened to know that her second husband had for some time previously taken his departure from her without quitting the world. When she had made known her desire, she was asked whether she had any proof of her husband's

death. She had not, but seemed to think she had an equivalent. He had been away from her six years, and when he went he was in a physical condition which was deplorable, and thirteen years older than herself. She went away, defiantly announcing that she would call herself a "grass-widow."¹

Three weeks after Mrs. —— had buried her husband, who was eighty-three years of age, she called for advice. She was deaf as a post, and communication could only be held with her by writing, so she came prepared with a clean slate and pencil. She wanted to get married again. "I buried my husband a week before Christmas; he died at home, but was buried by the parish from the Workhouse. Now I want to be married again, and the man is afraid. He has got nothing to be afraid of; he is a widower and I am a widow. He's been left two years, and has got no children. I have

¹ Grass-widow was anciently an unmarried woman who had a child, but now the word is used for a wife temporarily parted from her husband. The word means a *grace* widow—a widow by courtesy.

two children, and the youngest is twenty, and is a picture-frame maker. My eldest is married and got a family. My youngest son is going to leave the town and I shall be left alone, and I don't like it—I want to be married and settled ; and I want you to tell me whether there is anything to stop it. He don't think I've been a widow long enough."

When Emily gave notice for her marriage with a labourer, she was accompanied by her aunt. After arranging for the ceremony to take place at a quarter before nine on Sunday morning, the aunt inquired, " What would they charge to ring the bells when they come out of church ? " On being informed that a couple of guineas would be expected, and that the ringers would not object to three guineas, she replied, " Ah ! then it's different here to what it is in the country ; they ring 'em there for a shilling."

A young couple waited upon the clerk the day after their banns were asked for the third time. The young man inquired how long after banns publishing the law allowed the marriage

to be delayed : and “ what would happen if the time ” (three months) “ ran out ” ? He was told they would be in the same condition, so far as the Church was concerned, as they were before their banns were published at all.

A middle-aged woman on presenting herself said : “ I have two friends who live away from here, and they would like to be married in this church : and what they want to know is, if they had their banns asked in their own church, could they be married here ? ” Of course they could not. To be in a position to be married in any church but their own parish church, at least one of them must reside (*i.e.*, sleep at night) in the parish of the church they wish the marriage to take place in, during the fortnight the banns are being published : or, if by licence, the fifteen days’ residence must be made prior to the licence being granted.

An elderly countryman matrimonially inclined, rapped at the door, then with twinkling eyes and lady-like blushes, asked, “ Is this

the door ye come tu, to tell peoples' secrets?"

A woman having heard that she could be married for nothing on Sunday called to verify the report. She was informed that the fees ought to be double on that day, as all church officials and the clergy have quite sufficient Sunday duties to perform without the addition of marriages.

A young man who was unable to get married at the proper time, sent me the following letter: "Dear Sir, I wish to withdraw the banns for a time till my in attendat can get to —— to live you are welcome to that half crown."

A young couple wished to enter the banns on Saturday evening, and have the whole matter, the threefold publication and the marriage solemnised, the next day. The ingenuous youth, being spokesman, thus acquitted himself: "If we put the banns in on Saturday evening, could we be married three times over our heads the next day?"

The following anxious inquiry respecting a special marriage licence was received:—

“ Dear Sir,—It will be impossible for either myself or future Wife to reside in the Parish 15 days previous to the event taking place, as I understand by your letter it *is* necessary, I thought this only applied when Marriage took place by Banns, my object in wishing to be married by *Licence* was to *prevent* a great deal of fuss and excitement which would take place if the affair came off in —— where We are both so well known; hence my great wish to be Married Somewhere out of the city. I should be very *much* obliged to you if you would kindly let me know at your *very earliest* (as this of course is of great importance) whether We can be married at the time named, and *place*, by *Special Licence*, and what expense it would be, and any particulars you could furnish I shall fully appreciate. Will *special Licence* attain the object I wish? ”

To this the following reply was sent :—

“ As I understand the matter, you would have to engage a special lawyer, who would have to communicate with the Archbishop of

Canterbury, and give sufficient reasons to induce his Grace to grant you the privilege of spending something like £50 in fees in connection with your marriage."

SECTION VII

GIVING NOTICE FOR MARRIAGE

“Kind sir, quoth she, you have no skill ;
I’ve tarried two years against my will,
And I’ve made a promise, will I, or nill,
That I’ll be married o’ Sunday.”

Elizabethan Ballad.

THOUGH there be a great similarity in the weekly round of duties performed by the parish clerk, they are by no means monotonous. In a large and populous parish he has to deal with too many sorts and conditions of men and women to allow of this. Two meetings, or interviews, usually take place before the assembling together in church for the marriage. When all is well and progressing favourably after the first visit to arrange for the publication of the banns, a second meeting takes place to arrange

with the clerk the day and hour for the solemnisation in church. This latter visit parties are requested to make one or two days before the marriage. In so plain and simple a matter as the giving notice for marriage in compliance with this request, one would scarcely have thought scope would have been found for much variety of incidents ; but such has been the case. Some individuals, like children unable to keep a secret, have preferred to give the notice more than a week before the appointed time. The thought of getting married on Christmas Day so delighted a young woman that she felt bound to arrange for it and let the clerk know on November 27th. Others have procrastinated until the morning of their wedding-day ; and some to within ten minutes of the time the marriages are usually taken. The writer has not indulged in the folly of rising late ; yet some of these interesting people have been testing the power of the knocker, and their capabilities of playing a sonata on his door in early morn, to arouse him from his slumbers in order to tell him they

were wishing to get married ; and others have shown how inconsistently they could act when under matrimonial influences, by arousing the echoes outside the house. Ofttimes the writer has left his bed and gone down to see what was the cause of the disturbance. At length he was thoroughly cured of undertaking these untimely excursions. One night he went downstairs in the dark, and after striking his forehead forcibly against the edge of a door, found the disturber to be a woman wishing to give notice of her marriage to take place about three days hence. The thoughtlessness of some persons has been eclipsed by some more thoughtless still, who went to church without giving notice at all. That the variety might be complete, some who had given notice and fixed the time did not put in any appearance. Again, some had been so anxious to tie the matrimonial knot, they have given notice of their wish to be married when their names have been asked but twice, thinking that was quite sufficient ; and a couple of wise-acres gave notice, when they had been asked

only once, that they wished to be married next morning.

Annexed are a few specimens of the mode in which the introductions have been made :—

“Call to let you know we have decided upon the day. . It’s to be to-morrow.”

“I thought about getting married in the morning, and I thought I had better come and tell you.”

“Come to see what time that little job can come off on Monday.”

“Called to ask you what is the earliest we can *consummate* the marriage?”

“Mr. B. and Mrs. B. as is to be, to be married on Monday morning at twelve o’clock.”

Mary was one of the happy-go-lucky type of young women, thoughtless and frisky. When giving notice for her marriage, she was asked the name of her young man, and jauntily answered, “Jack P.” The clerk turned over the pages of the banns book, and closely examined the entries, but “Jack P.” obstinately refused to turn up! Then she explained

his name is "John H.," but he always goes by the name of "Jack P."

As large numbers have taken, after the completion of the publication of their banns, the very earliest opportunity to be married, so there have been many who have permitted the allowed time of grace to expire before their marriages have taken place. Indeed hundreds of couples have never after the publication been married at all. Others there have been, who, after the three months have outrun, have had their banns renewed.

J. and his sweetheart were extremely vacillating. Their banns were duly published, the three months allowed them passed by, and they remained unmarried. After a time the order was renewed, and a second half a crown spent for publication. A still further interval elapsed; and then the congregations were asked the seventh, eighth, and ninth times to declare if any of their members knew any cause or impediment why the couple should not be married. Still no marriage followed: the three half a crowns were spent, and the

assembled congregations were advertised in vain and to no purpose.

H. and I. were another of the couples whose banns were heard in church nine times, instead of three. In the month of June they were first heard ; next in February in the following year ; and again in August. In September the final resolution was made, and in the last week of that month the marriage that had been fifteen months in hand, took place.

Amongst the great matrimonial procrastinators the writer had dealings with, H. and C. must certainly be placed. In December they had their banns published. They not only allowed the whole of the following year to pass, but waited until the June in the second year before anything more was heard of them : then notice for their marriage was given ; they were in a hurry and wished to be married the next day. The absurdity of the whole proceeding must have been known by them, yet they allowed a member of a noble family (who was interested in them, and evidently under a misapprehension as to the time that had

elapsed since the publication of the banns) to give the futile notice. The banns of course had to be republished; and not until after the expiration of two more months were these dilatory persons married.

It is an unfortunate trait in some person's character to be late. A's movements were provokingly protracted. He was on the experienced side of sixty. Even the privileged possession of that inspiriting and rather costly document, a marriage licence, failed to quicken his movements. Its gracious declaration assuring him it had been granted that his "reasonable and honest Desires for true and lawful Matrimony may the more speedily obtain their due effect," was so lost upon him that he allowed the signed and sealed permission of the Bishop to remain quietly in his possession seven weeks, before he took active measures with the church officials. When fifty of the days that his purchased licence allowed him for marriage had passed, he called upon the writer, and said, "I'm thinking of getting

married somehow or other. I don't mind when, any day would do, when I can have it quiet." His final request was that the fact of his having passed the Rubicon might not "appear in print," adding, "I'm in business and I don't wish to be *concratalated* all over the shop."

C. made known it was not only his wish to be married, but that he should like it to take place the very next day, and that he must have a licence, as banns were out of the question. He had not then made application for the licence ; but urged that if it were possible it should be obtained in time. It was just possible, but there were difficulties in the way. He first of all found that it was absolutely necessary to make two journeys of twenty miles each. The last passenger train had left. He obtained information as to the movements of goods trains to the place he wished to go, and found one would arrive there before the office from which the licence must be obtained, would be closed. Success was thus assured.

At 11.30 one morning a cab was driven up. From it emerged an anxious lady, who said the gentleman was inside the vehicle and they wished to be married directly, as her companion was dying. He wanted to be married, and it must be directly, if at all. As no banns had been published and no licence obtained, at first thought the difficulties that lay in the way appeared to make marriage an impossibility for them on that day. A surrogate had first to be sought, and the one who resided nearest was not at home. The only other surrogate residing in the town had also just left his house, but fortunately he was caught when passing. The urgency of the matter was explained to him, and he kindly returned and took the necessary affidavit. To ensure success the same railway journey the enterprising bridegroom before-mentioned took had to be taken, the marriage licence procured, the return journey completed, a clergyman obtained, and the vital part of the Marriage Service gone through, before the clock struck three. It seemed impossible to accomplish so much in so very

limited a time. The dying man was unable to do it, but it was managed for him within the time fixed by the law. He just managed with help to reach the communion rails and fulfil his required part. Five days later he expired. When sixteen months had passed, his widow again sought the services of the Church. Instead of the marriage coming off, the gentleman was so lively that he "went off," leaving the town and the widow behind him. After a few weeks' reflection, she paid a visit to express the hope that if the clergyman was able to fine the faithless one for mocking the Church, he would do it.¹

Some people have an inveterate mania for matrimony. One day a man of this kind called

¹ It was customary in the first quarter of the present (19th) century when couples, who, after having had their banns of marriage published, failed to proceed to matrimony, to fine the individual who barred progress, in order to produce a salutary impression of the enormity of the error that had been committed. On examining the account paid weekly by the parish clerk to the incumbent of our church we found from October, 1811, to January, 1826, no less than sixteen entries of payments of six

on the clerk. He was an individual of the John Bull type, with face rotund and plump, eyes twinkling with anticipatory pleasures, a look of complete satisfaction brightening up his entire countenance; and he said that he wished to be married. It was to be by licence, and as quickly as possible. After stating his name, he was asked—

“Have either of you been married?”

“I have.”

“You are a widower?”

“I’ve got a wife living, a very careless one. Of course I’m going to provide for her. I’m heir to the Birmingham Estate Iron Works.”

“Are you living with your wife?”

“Yes, up to this morning. I got my breakfast with her.”

shillings and eightpence for “Mock of Church,” one-fourth of them appearing in the year 1813. The last entry was on January 7, 1826. The writer (and probably his immediate predecessors) never received a fine of this character, but he, from disappointed and revengefully inclined ladies of various ages, received urgent requests that he would, if possible, make their unfaithful lovers pay for “*Mocking the Church.*”

“Have you spoken to her about this?”

“Yes, I told her about it, and she's quite agreeable. You see she's been a hard-working woman. She wants something lighter; so she's going to cook for my future wife; and she'll be provided for.”

“A man who has a wife living is not allowed to marry another.”

“But the money will do it. You see, the amount of money will allow a man to have two wives. The interest of the property is supposed to be £50,000 a year.”

“Even members of the Royal Family are only allowed to have one wife at a time. If you were to marry a second wife, your wife could bring a charge of bigamy against you.”

The idea of her doing such a thing he scornfully rejected. “She wouldn't do such a thing. She's quite agreeable.”

When asked who was the individual he spoke of as his future wife, he mentioned a lady well known for her philanthropic labours amongst the poor. He was unable to give her Christian

name, and wished to know whether he should go and ask her.

The extraordinary statements revealed the state of the poor fellow's mind. He was therefore dealt with kindly and cautiously. At the termination of the interview, he was told the matter must remain just as it then stood. With this he appeared content, and quietly departed.

SECTION VIII

POSTPONEMENT OF MARRIAGE

“By one decisive argument
Giles gained his lovely Kate’s consent
To fix the wedding-day.
‘Why in such haste, dear Giles, to wed?
I shall not change my mind,’ she said.
‘But then,’ says he, ‘I may.’”

Old Baliad.

INCIDENTS have not been wanting to convince lovers of the uncertainty of things earthly, even in matters they had firmly set their hearts upon, and on which they had built joyous expectations. When some were upon the threshold of a matrimonial career, and ready to enter upon it “for better for worse,” a check has unexpectedly arisen, and disappointment followed, upsetting and deranging their plans. In some instances the change has been consequent

upon their own doings, in others from circumstances beyond their control. Some of the delays have been of short duration, and some have been protracted ; but whatever the disturbing cause may have been it has proved unpleasant and disquieting to the parties concerned. It requires but little stretch of imagination to pourtray the annoyance a postponement of marriage must cause, after both the day and hour have been decided upon and arrangements made for its performance. Many couples within the writer's knowledge have undergone the untoward experience. A few specimens will now be given. First, of those who decided to be married by licence.¹

A special marriage licence is granted in England by the Archbishop of Canterbury only by virtue of stat. 25 Henry VIII. cap. 21. It dispenses with a fixed period of residence, and authorises marriage at any hour of the night or day, and at any place, whether con-

¹ A licence is a dispensation for banns in order that the desire of the parties to have their marriage solemnised, may the more speedily obtain a due effect.

secrated or not. The recent Marriage Acts contain clauses reserving the right to the Archbishop. The privilege of a special licence is supposed to be restricted to persons of high degree. By a regulation of Archbishop Secker in 1759, special licences are not to be granted except to persons of the rank of peers or peeresses in their own right, their sons and daughters, dowager peeresses, privy councillors, the judges, baronets, knights, and members of Parliament ; but this regulation does not bar the Archbishop from granting occasional favours beyond these special limits. In all cases the special fiat of his Grace is necessary.

It having become fashionable in recent years to be married after banns, marriages by licence have consequently diminished in number. To ascertain definitely the difference the change of custom has caused in this respect, the writer examined and compared the entries of five hundred marriages in a register book in use in the middle of the present century, with the last five hundred marriages that had been solemnised in the same church, and found that of the

first group, one hundred were by licence ; and of the second group, forty years later, only thirty-seven couples had availed themselves of the privilege.

The temporary disappointment experienced by F. and his bride arose from thoughtlessness on his part. When making application for a marriage licence, he, as on ordinary occasions, mentioned but one of each of their Christian names, imagining, as many do, that a single Christian name is sufficient. (It would be a source of much convenience if parents in general thought so when deciding upon their children's names.) Consequently, when the licence was prepared, both their names were imperfect in the document, and as the office from whence it was issued was twenty miles away, it could not be immediately corrected. It had to be taken back, and the marriage postponed until the next morning.

John was twenty-five, his bride elect twenty. When banns publishing had duly prepared the way, he gave notice of their intention to be married on Friday. Now the Scotch prefer

Friday above any other day for marriage ; the English, on the other hand, generally avoid it, so that fewer marriages take place on Friday than any other day in the week. In Scotland the smallest number, and in England the largest number, of marriages take place on Sundays. In a six-line jingle the week-days are thus matrimonially described—

“ Monday for health,
Tuesday for wealth,
Wednesday the best day of all,
Thursday for crosses,
Friday for losses,
Saturday no luck at all.”

John gave notice for his marriage to take place on Friday. This order was afterwards countermanded, as he had discovered his young woman did not like Friday, but preferred Saturday, and notified their decision to be married on that day. Ere Saturday dawned, he put in an appearance to annul the last arrangement ; as he had discovered that Saturday was a busy day they decided to put off the marriage until Sunday. This promise was kept.

When two years had passed, his wife had gone through a time of widowhood, and was again married. No vacillating symptoms were shown by her on that occasion.

But the longest postponement of marriage within the writer's knowledge was from May, 1876, when the banns were first published, to December, 1884.

Another couple paused at the church gates, and experienced a change of mind, not from personal but from financial reasons. When at the church gates an investigation into their financial resources was made, with the result that a few pence was all the bridegroom could muster, and the pocket of the bride was empty. Until then, each had been silently relying upon the other. They then turned back homeward. When difficulties had been adjusted, and the exchequer sufficiently replenished, they renewed their arrangements and were married.

A. was a carpenter, and, instead of spending as a red-letter day the particular Sunday on which he meant to get married, he was doomed to spend it reluctantly, moodily, and reflectively

in his master's workshop whilst unpleasantly occupied in making a coffin !

S. was a young lady who felt a great interest in watching which way the wind blew, to enable her to judge the progress her John was probably making. To her great satisfaction she saw it was favouring her wishes thoroughly ; and so convinced was she that her young man would be wafted into port in excellent time, that she felt justified in fixing the hour she wished to be married to him, and arranging for the service ; taking at the same time the precaution gently to add a proviso suitable to the circumstances. She found her calculations verified and her hopes realised. At the very hour decided upon, John brought her with him to church and made her his wife.

Not quite so favourable was the wind towards E. She, like S., made her calculations, and built bright expectations upon them. But sailors have to do with waves and tides as well as winds, and the former sometimes prove to be opposing forces. All have to be considered by those on sailing vessels. On the day expected her young

man reached the shore, but it was not until the hours for marriage had long passed. Having arranged for her wedding to take place that morning, it had to be postponed, and having postponed it, they waited a few days before fresh arrangements were made.

W. was one of those fortunate men who were, if they are not still, popularly supposed to be under the protection, when at sea, of "a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft." If that be so, Elizabeth's young man must have been doubly favoured with cherubic influence, for when ashore he was under the sway of another small cherub who does not sit up aloft, but actively mingles with young men and maidens, and interferes considerably with their affections. W. had positively felt the latter cherub's persuasive powers, and had yielded to them so fully that, he had given his heart to Elizabeth, and was prepared to marry her when next he came ashore. That this might be the case, E. had made full preparation, even to fixing the day and hour for the marriage. But, contrary to her expectations, he came not at the time she

had appointed; winds and waves as well as cherubs were at work, and the influences appear to have become so mixed that E. was kept waiting through the days of, to her, an almost interminable week before he made his appearance.

The pleasant wish entertained by two sisters was that they might be married at the same time; but they could feel by no means sure their desire would be realised, as C.'s young man was one of those who went "down to the sea in ships"—sailing ships—and did "business on the great waters"; and he was at sea at the time when active arrangements were being made for her sister's marriage. His arrival in port by the day they desired depended upon the uncertain wind. If that was propitious, all would accord with their hopes, but if not, the marriages could not take place together, as C.'s must be postponed. And so it came to pass. The carpenter, uncontrolled by winds and waves, plighted his troth to his bride at the set time, but the sailor and his lassie were kept apart in anxious expectancy for two weeks longer.

SECTION IX

MARRIAGES ABANDONED

“ The girl who’s self-asserting,
Pretty, and fond of flirting,
Is the girl who turns the fellows’ heads ;
But the modest little maid,
Who of work is not afraid,
Is the sort of girl a fellow weds.”

F. PROCEEDED *before* marriage to undertake what many ladies postpone until *after* marriage, *i.e.*, give an example of her power of independent action. She decided to get married ; she authorised the banns to be published ; she gave notice for the marriage, and arranged the hour with the clerk ; the young man being in happy ignorance of the proceedings. Having thus taken all the trouble and responsibility of preparing the way, and getting ready a clear course for her intended bridegroom, the next

step in her programme was to tell him that he was to go to church at such an hour on the morrow to be married ! But instead of the youth jumping for joy, he told her that she might go to church by herself.

Even when a licence for marriage has been purchased, it must not be taken as proof positive that the ceremony will take place. The writer has known no less than six instances that have ended in failure. In one of these, this result was brought about by the young man unwisely giving heed to the voice of a slanderer who, to prevent the marriage from taking place, blackened the character of the young woman, inducing him to abandon her, after the wedding-ring had been purchased and the hour fixed for the marriage. The young woman and her friends were bitterly disappointed ; the lover who had discarded her became dangerously ill ; and when all the mischief had been wrought, we were told the libeller acknowledged that he had made a mistake.

Sunday afternoon was the time M. selected

to give notice that she wished to be married next morning. When half an hour had been wasted in waiting in church, M. arrived with a countenance anything but gratifying and a report anything but satisfactory. She had been looking for H. but could not find him anywhere : reminding one of the words in the Song of Solomon, " I sought him whom my soul loveth ; I sought him but I found him not." From a rumour that reached us subsequently we were led to believe that H. escaped "as a bird out of the snare of the fowler."

One of the most sudden changes of matrimonial intentions that came within the writer's knowledge was made by a young woman, when fully prepared for marriage. Her arrangements were complete, and she called to say she wished to be married next morning. Within an hour of giving the notice she sent a friend to revoke it, and to state that the reason of the unexpected change was that as the young man had just come home in an intoxicated condition she had instantly decided she would not have him.

Isabella's disappointment arose from sheer inability. Just before the time fixed for the ceremonial, the magistrates inconveniently gave a man in whom she felt no interest, or wished to have anything to do with—he was commonly called a "Jailor"—instructions to take particular charge of her for twelve months ; and he would not allow her to come out of his establishment for a single hour, even to get married.

Death's shafts fly so thick in this world that even the writer's select circle of lovers, standing expectantly just outside the marriage portal, and prepared to enter in, have not been entirely exempt. Some when in that interesting position have been struck down, to the great grief of the bereaved lover.¹

Disappointment overtook E. in a peculiarly distressing manner. I. was at sea. In order that E. might become his wife immediately

¹ There is a curious epitaph on a gravestone in a churchyard in the South of England—

"The wedding day appointed was,
And wedding clothes provided ;
But ere the day did come, alas !
He sickened, and he die did."

after he came ashore, their banns were published in his absence. All was made ready, but he came not. The pang the news of his death gave her was not lessened when she found that at the very time she was ordering the banns to be published, he had been drowned two days.

It is dangerous for a gentleman to become entangled in the amatory wiles of an attractive-looking gipsy, as few manage to escape scot free. This agreeable feat was accomplished by H. after having been so thoroughly allured as to have his banns published. Though foiled, the gipsy was not discomfited ; she was still in the matrimonial market but not for any bidder. Two years passed before she succeeded in securing an eligible bridegroom. Matrimonial influences were actively at work in her family just then. Three days before her marriage after banns, her sister succeeded in adding to their family a moneyed gentleman who preferred marriage by licence.

SECTION X

INOPPORTUNE MARRIAGES

“ That it should come to this !
But two months dead ! Nay, not so much, not two ;
 . . . Within a month—
Let me not think on’t,—Frailty, thy name is woman !
A little month, or ere those shoes were old,
With which she followed my poor father’s body,
Like Niobe, all tears—why she, even she . . . married.”

HAMLET.

IF marriage within a month of the death of a husband so disgusted Shakespeare as to wring so stern a protest from him, we can imagine how fired with indignation he would have been had instances similar to those now recorded reached his ears.

V. was so lost to all good feeling that he completed his marriage arrangements, and had

the indecency to be married to his third wife, whilst his mother's remains lay in her coffin within his home, awaiting burial. Had he and the lifeless corpse been miles apart, some apologist might possibly have been found ready with an excuse for such heartless conduct ; but even so poor an opportunity was not afforded, as his marriage took place in the same church wherein the remains of his mother were taken the very next day.

If age and the world's buffetings take off the keen edge of sensibility, A. was not in a position to claim the influence of either. Not a score of years had his presence graced the world. So insensible to all good feeling was he, and so unable to grieve for the mother who had done so much for him, that he had the shamelessness to enter as a bridegroom the same church through which all that was mortal of her had been borne for burial but two days previously.

A young woman, four days after following her father to the grave, was able, in the same church where she had heard the Burial Service

read, to appear as a bride, attended by a party of friends.

R.'s mind seemed more impressed with the desire to get married than with chastened grief to mourn the loss of her father. She was living at home and was but nineteen years of age. So desirous was she to be married to a youth of twenty, that she could not allow more than two days to pass after the burial of her parent before authorising her banns to be published. Five weeks were permitted to pass before the marriage took place.

Three weeks had been allowed to elapse after the burial of her mother before A. ventured to appear in the same church as a bride arrayed in a very beautiful bridal costume. She was in her teens. The marriage was by licence, and all the accessories betokened high festivity. The wedding party was large, and three well-appointed carriages were engaged for their conveyance. All trace of death's dark shadow had disappeared, and the saying, "Out of sight, out of mind," was vividly illustrated.

Yet one more of these unpleasant incidents was supplied by a young woman twenty years of age. She had not to mourn the loss of one parent, but of both. Father and mother died within two months ; and the orphan they left behind them remained unmarried *one month*.

SECTION XI

BANNS CERTIFICATE DIFFICULTIES

“To be, or not to be, that is the question :—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune ;
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them.”—*Hamlet*.

“For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently.”
Much Ado about Nothing.

THE second Rubric at the commencement of the Marriage Service says, “If the Persons that are to be married dwell in divers Parishes, the Banns must be asked in both Parishes : and the Curate of the one Parish shall not solemnise Matrimony betwixt them, without a Certificate of the Banns being thrice asked from the Curate of the other Parish.”

Banns certificates have, from various causes, been responsible for much distress of mind in many couples, when on the very threshold of married life. It has usually overtaken them suddenly and caused not "a sea of trouble," but rather "a tempest in a teapot" to arise, and much mental anxiety to be endured, until the difficulty has been overcome. Sometimes the fiasco has arisen from a parish clerk's officiousness in signing the document and thus issuing it on his own authority ; sometimes the clergyman has stumbled ; and oftentimes it has been brought about by the carelessness of one of the lovers.

When a marriage takes place the day after the third time of asking, the banns certificate cannot be presented in many instances until the morning of the wedding-day. But it is always better, when the time permits, to present the document to the minister or clerk some days beforehand, in order that, should a blunder be detected, it may be rectified in due time, and not cause confusion at the last moment.

Perplexity and uncertainty troubled P. and his young lady on the morning of their marriage. On the former presenting the banns certificate, it was found to be signed not by the minister, or by a clergyman officiating for him, but by the parish clerk, whose position in the church conferred no such power upon him. The marriage had to be delayed until inquiry had been made of the minister of the parish to which the bridegroom belonged. A telegram was at once sent to him, and the following reply was promptly received from the curate: "Yes, clerk signed certificate; quite correct. F., Curate." It being sufficiently evident from this telegram that the banns had been duly published, and that no impediment had been alleged, the marriage was allowed to take place, to the easement and composure of at least two agitated minds.

E. and her sweetheart resided in towns more than one hundred miles apart. Their banns were published in both their parish churches. When their arrangements were perfected for the marriage, E. gave notice for its solemnisation in her church; and at the same time pre-

sented the certificate that had been forwarded by the young man. On examination, it was found that his name was incorrectly spelt. The last three letters of his surname were "ver"; but in the document they were set forth as "val." In the hope that the error might have been made by the person who filled up the certificate, and not in the publication of the banns, the following telegram was sent to the minister: "Please telegraph name of man as published, Banns No. —. 'ver,' or 'val'? If 'val,' re-ask them to-morrow as 'ver.'" The error was unfortunately made in the publication, and the marriage had to be postponed.

Notwithstanding the clearness of the Rubric already quoted, that "the Curate of the one Parish shall not solemnise Matrimony without a Certificate of the Banns being thrice asked from the Curate of the other Parish," the following extraordinary certificate was issued by a rector, who had not the excuse of pressure of time for the non-performance of his duty, as the marriage was not to take place until a month after the publication of banns:—

"I certify you Banns of Marriage between — of —, Bachelor, and — of —, Spinster, were Published in — Parish Church on Sunday, Oct. 19th.

"Sunday, October 26th (*not* on this day, church being closed that day).

"Sunday, October 31st.

"By me, —, Rector of —."

The clergyman to whom this was sent was utterly unable to accept as legal such an imperfect document.

As I. and his intended were residing in adjoining parishes, they were informed when entering the banns for publication in his church that they must be asked in her church as well. The marriage was, as usual, to take place in the bride's church. When the time came to arrange for its solemnisation, the certificate was applied for by the young man and obtained. Armed, as they imagined, with its all-sufficient authority, they proceeded to give notice for their marriage to the clerk of the parish in which the young woman lived. Had the document been a marriage licence, and not a

banns certificate, all might have been well ; but they had made a grave omission in not having given instructions for the publication of their banns in that church. Consequently, the document could not be accepted or the marriage take place until the banns had been thrice asked there.

It is pleasant to see persons with countenances beaming with satisfaction, when we are assured they have good reason for it, as they are then presenting an additional proof that life is worth living. But when a party are seen on the best of terms with themselves, and in good temper with all around, simply because they—without being aware of it—are placing themselves in a ridiculous position, one cannot help laughing at them, and thinking on what a slender basis some pleasures rest. It was in this way an incongruous wedding-party were greeted as they were seen driving up to the church gates. All were well dressed, and radiant with smiles. The bride expectant, though not arrayed in Charles Dickens' white muslin, was "prepared

as a bride adorned for her husband." But, as the old proverb says, "It's an ill procession where the devil holds the candle"; and for certain reasons we could not but feel inward gratification at the discomfiture that awaited them. It was a sorry spectacle to see a real lady, possessing ample means, and who had been "a pilgrim on the world's highway" three-quarters of a century, in the hands of an —, enterprising gentleman, just two-thirds her own age, and so ignorant that in the note of six lines he sent the clerk six words were wrongly spelt, to say nothing of the surname without a capital letter. Fortunately for the lady and her family he proved an ignorant blunderer in making arrangements, and was the sole cause of the failure that then awaited him. The plan adopted was that the marriage should take place after banns. When authorising the banns to be published, he gave his present residence as within the writer's parish, and the lady's residence in a neighbouring parish. Publication had consequently to be made in both churches, and a banns certificate was

required to show that it had been duly performed. When the party arrived at the church to be married they quickly discovered that Mr. Blunderer had committed two great mistakes. First, he had brought his smiling party of innocents to church without having given notice for the marriage, so that nothing was in readiness for them. This, though foolish and inconvenient, might, with a little delay, have been set to rights. But the second blunder was insurmountable. No banns certificate was forthcoming, as no banns had been published in the other church. As the situation was realised countenances changed and became elongated. The disappointed bride, after much ado, summed her position up by saying, "They will laugh at me when I go home." Addressing her crestfallen guide, philosopher, and friend, and overlooking the fact that his blundering was receiving its rightful recompense, the lady said, "I ought to have come myself before" (when the banns were entered), "and then the mistake would not have been made," evidently conscious

that her power and ability to arrange matters were, like her years, fully a quarter of a century in advance of his. The result of a consultation was an arrangement that both should reside in the parish of the church they wished to be married in during the period the banns were being re-published. And the bridegroom expectant was thus duly cautioned, "If you make a muddle of it this time, I won't have you." Fortunately no marriage followed.

Some persons may be favoured with the plainest directions for their guidance, and all to no purpose, being either too stupid to follow them or too determined to have their own way. It was thus with R. As he and the lady resided in two parishes, he was told exactly what had to be done in the matter of the banns and the banns certificate; but the information was quite lost upon him so far as the certificate was concerned. Instead of obtaining and presenting it when giving notice for the marriage as advised, he gave three days' notice, but brought no certificate. He then promised to send it by post before the

day of marriage. This promise was not kept. At the appointed hour the marriage party arrived at the church, and R. was asked again for the important document, as upon its production and its accuracy the marriage then depended. He had not brought it, and had not even taken the trouble to apply for it, imagining that another of his unreliable promises would satisfy the clergyman. He was told that the marriage could not take place under such circumstances, and they had to return home as they were.

The axiom that there are two ways of doing things, a right way and a wrong, was exemplified by T. T., although a man of business, when making preparation for his marriage, acted in anything but a business manner. His bride was residing in a parish at some distance from his ; she was a respectable woman well known to her rector, and the marriage was arranged to take place in her parish church. When T. presented himself there for marriage, as he had forwarded no banns certificate he was asked for it, but was unable to produce it. When

questioned as to the publication of banns in his parish, he assured the clergyman that it had been done, and promised him that if he would marry them the certificate should be posted immediately on the return home. The former, knowing the bride and sympathising with her, very kindly, but not legally, performed the marriage, relying fully upon the promise T. had made. After taking his bride home, one of his earliest objects was the fulfilment of the promise he had given ; and then, to his wife's dismay and his own confusion, he found he had acted so absurdly that no banns had been published. It was seen that instead of visiting the parish clerk and making the requisite arrangement with him, he had instead gone to a chapel of ease in the parish, where no banns are published nor marriages take place ; had spoken to a man there, who told him it would be all right ; had paid nothing ; and with that idiotic proceeding had remained contented. The bride keenly felt the false position she found herself to be in ; and the only thing that could then be done to relieve her from it

speedily was to obtain a licence and have the marriage ceremony repeated. This was done at once, the bride passing through the unpleasant ordeal with eyes bedewed with tears.

A bucolic "yunker" was going to be married. His young woman lived in the town, and in her parish church the ceremony was to take place. When he left his home for the purpose he thoughtfully placed in his pocket the document he understood would be wanted by the clergyman who was to marry them. When presented, it was found to be not the banns certificate required but the bridegroom's baptismal certificate.

X. found matrimony to be an expensive matter. He learned, to his great dislike, that it would cost him quite four more shillings than he had expected, the additional expenditure being caused by himself and his bride residing in separate parishes. The payment of two fees for banns he considered as very objectionable, and before he had become reconciled to it his mind was still more exercised by a fee being demanded for the banns certificate. This was

most depressing. He said, "My young woman paid half a crown at her church, and I paid half a crown here ; and now you want eighteenpence more !" The half-crowns were for banns publishing, and the eighteenpence was for the certificate that he must have to show the banns had been duly published in his parish church. This eighteenpence was the last straw that broke the camel's back. X. wouldn't pay it, and consequently he could not have the certificate. He took his departure with his back very much up ; he didn't think it right to pay any more ; and he seemed more inclined to give up his young lady than part with his eighteenpence. Rather more than a fortnight elapsed before he became reconciled to this huge expenditure.

SECTION XII

GOING TO CHURCH TO BE MARRIED

“Annie Moore’s gone away to get married,
Her loss we all deeply deplore ;
’Mong hosts of friends here she has tarried,
But she’ll never come back Annie Moore.”

It has been an amusing study quietly to observe the divers ways and means, the little devices adopted by some of the happy couples when taking by themselves, or in company with friends, that long-to-be-remembered journey—the going to church to be married. It is an event in which ample scope is afforded, as in ordinary matters, for the exhibition of diversities of character. A pleasing variety in the methods adopted for reaching the sacred building has been presented by our ten thousand couples.

In the first instance, they may be roughly divided into two sections—those who have walked to church, and those who have ridden. In each of these divisions, widely differing characteristics have been noticeable. The commendable virtue of punctuality has been complied with by many. Some persons, to their great advantage, practise promptitude in daily life; while others have become such habitual laggards, that special occasions fail to arouse and improve them, consequently they have been late in reaching the church. There are, however, two kinds of unpunctuality. Some, eager, light-hearted persons, have been so carried away by excitement, and have arrived so early at church that they have found the doors locked. Others have been so backward that they have tried the patience and wasted much of the church officials' time. Some have found on arrival that parson and clerk had been, had waited, and had gone! Those who reside nearest the church usually arrive latest.

The manner of proceeding to church has

been very diversified. Amongst the humbler classes who have walked to church have been those who proceeded in the old and orthodox order of the bride and her father, following in the rear of bridegroom and bridesmaid. Others have walked together casually, as any ordinary persons might. Others have gone, the men by one route, the women by another. Some bridegrooms and brides have walked together to the church as on ordinary occasions, unaccompanied by any friends, and have then engaged the friendly services of the clerk and pew-opener. Some working men have thus sought secrecy to avoid spending a sum of money that they could ill-afford in treating their fellow workmen. The extremity of privacy has been attained when bridegroom and bride have, in addition to the arrangement with the clerk and pew-opener, arrived at and left the church quite separately.

To be conveyed to and from church in suitable vehicles as their circumstances permit is, of course, the most pleasant and agreeable

method for a marriage party to adopt. To proceed thither on foot, when other and more appropriate means are at their disposal, would betray a parsimonious spirit, and afford the sarcastic an opportunity of indulging in disparaging insinuations, and the spiteful of making unworthy suggestions.

The vehicles requisitioned by the "riding" division have included long lines of private broughams, well-appointed carriages attractively drawn by prancing greys, carriages with gay postillions, open chaises, cabs, hansoms, wagonettes, common carts, and invalid chairs, accompanied in two or three instances by men on horseback.

Into hackney carriages constructed to carry four persons, six light-hearted if not light-weighted individuals have often found great pleasure in squeezing themselves.

(a) WALKING TO CHURCH.

In more than one case the bride walked alone to church carrying a good-sized parcel, in order that her mission might not be known.

A similar desire animated B. when on the way to church she carried a bonnet-box, and was accompanied by her bridesmaid. The couple, as they passed along the streets, looked as if on a shopping expedition. No passer-by would have imagined the real purpose they had in view. But the bonnet-box, although designed to make impressions along the route, was really serving a second purpose at the same time. It was not empty ; something lay nestled therein that would be called into requisition when the church porch was entered. The bride's wedding bonnet was there, and must be worn at the wedding. With the aid of the bridesmaid the toilette begun at home was to be completed in the porch. The bridesmaid's smart bonnet was also there. This was removed from its hiding-place and donned ; and, on entering the church, the pair had a presentable appearance. After the ceremony, the porch was utilised for a reversal of their former movements. The wedding bonnets were lovingly replaced in the box, and sombre-looking, every-day hats quickly substituted.

This unusual procedure was not designed to cover anything disreputable, but to prevent the marriage from being blazed abroad that morning, as the bride had to appear the same day as a witness in the County Court, and had no wish to give judge or solicitors an opportunity of indulging in pleasantries at her expense.

(b) RIDING TO CHURCH.

A certain cabman enjoyed much popularity amongst friends who resorted to the same cabstand. He was in his twenty-third year when he took to himself a wife. Nothing could be more appropriate to the occasion than that he should yield up the reins to another, and exchange the box for a seat inside with the rest of the small bridal party, and this was accordingly done. Whisperings of the event having reached the ears of some of the cabbies, they resolved to honour the occasion by their presence and a demonstration. At the appointed time four of them assembled with their cabs, and each extemporised a flag by tying

his handkerchief to the top of his whip. In this style they escorted the wedding-party to the church and home.

M. and his sweetheart were respectably conducted, but impecunious. Without a coin in their pockets they waited upon the writer, and, with gleeful spirits, entered their names in the banns book. On being asked for the usual fee, amounting to half a crown, they made no sham pretence of diving their hands into their pockets for the purpose of producing the sum, but looked steadfastly at each other and said they had no money. When M. reappeared he produced four sixpences and the remainder in bronze. On counting these coins, however, he found the total to be one halfpenny deficient. With seriousness stamped upon his countenance, he said, "I hope I haven't lost that halfpenny, as I haven't another." Then he searched diligently till he found it. After so unsatisfactory a beginning, imagine our surprise on seeing this young man, to whom one halfpenny was a source of anxiety, bringing his bride with

him to church in a carriage drawn by a pair of horses!

The writer has seen more than one individual drawn up to the communion rails in an invalid chair for the purpose of marriage.

One bridegroom was a widower, twenty-six years of age. He had to lie on his back whilst engaged in the service. It will suffice only to add dates. He was married on Dec. 10th, baptized Dec. 12th, died Dec. 18th, buried Dec. 23rd.

As it is in the nature of gipsies to be fond of display, there was a little flutter of expectancy among the fair sex when the rumour was spread abroad that a gipsy lass of sixteen was about to be married to a gentleman. The wedding was to be a grand one, as the queen of the gipsies was expected to be present. Their encampment at the time was a little beyond the limits of the town, and thence they were to proceed to the church decked in all the colours of the rainbow. A couple of smart carriages, with high-spirited horses, were engaged, and the only failure in carrying out the

programme was the non-appearance of the gipsy royalty. All the members of the party were fearfully and wonderfully dressed, sufficiently so to satisfy even gipsy cravings, and to win the admiration of the gaping crowd. There were eight persons, and they all conducted themselves in an exemplary manner throughout.

SECTION XIII

DRESS AT WEDDINGS

“How vain we are, how fond to show
Our clothes, and call them rich and new,
When the poor sheep and silkworms wore
That very clothing long before.”

DR. WATTS.

WE have already indicated the style of dress in which some happy individuals presented themselves in the chancel of God's house for the purpose of engaging in the nuptial rites. They ranged widely, from the wandering, homeless casual with her entire wardrobe, dirty and worn, upon her back, to ladies resplendent with point d'Alençon lace artistically embroidered with pearls, with exquisite bridal veils and wreaths of orange blossoms, adorned also with diamonds and pearls, gold bracelets,

and bearing lovely shower-bouquets of snowy-white exotic blooms.

It would be a difficult thing to describe adequately the toilette of A. When stating her age for insertion in the marriage register she acknowledged her years to be sixty-nine ; but the clergyman who performed the ceremony assured the writer she was seventy-five at the least. From head to feet this rejoicing bride was a picture of lively colours. The crowning point of her costume was a bright pink sash, very broad, and its streamers lengthy.

It was otherwise with I. Had she, when on her way to church, been preceded by the corpse of a relative on its way to burial, her dress and appearance would have harmonised more with the occasion than with a marriage. Black, in all its blackness, was seen upon her from her head to her feet, without the slightest alleviation. Very dismal attire this was for a bride, though she was well in the fifth decade of her age. Death's influence was distinctly upon her. When repeating the sentence that has reference to death it came forth in a halting, hesitating

manner, she said, "Till death does us does part."

Marriages must of necessity occasionally occur in families a few months after a sad bereavement has fallen upon them; and it is right, and quite possible under such circumstances, to give loving evidence of remembrance and to show amidst the marriage joys that the lost loved one has not been forgotten. The writer remembers such good feeling being shown in a most appropriate manner by a young lady who, within half a year, experienced both the sorrow of losing a beloved parent and the happiness of entering into married life. At her marriage proofs of due regard for both events were given: she was adorned cheerfully, as became a bride, and at the same time sympathetically, by wearing a costly dress of white crape that had a rich and, in the bright sunshine, a beautiful appearance.

Old superstitions seem to be rapidly losing their hold on the people. Not very long since it was considered to be an evil omen for a

person to appear in mourning apparel at a marriage. Now it is often done, and little or no notice is taken of it. At a young lady's wedding, not very long since, there were three ladies in widows' attire, all members of the small marriage party. Their presence proved the lively interest they took in the happy event ; their garments indicated loving remembrance of their departed relatives.

An absurdity was presented by K., a young woman nineteen years of age. She was married on a hot morning in August, and to complete her toilette she had put a pair of warm mittens upon her hands.

The length of time usually consumed by ladies at their toilette is a standing joke amongst gentlemen. The tables were, however, turned by N. on the morning of her marriage, and she could, had she pleased, have laughed at her bridegroom, but she was much too mature to run any venturesome risks. She knew that he could not be so active as he was when only twenty-five ; his movements were becoming sedate, as befitted a man approaching

his sixtieth year. As the bride found he was not ready at the time appointed, she came on to church, leaving him behind to complete his preparations. As he kept the wedding party waiting, the lady was questioned as to the cause of his delay. She replied that she had left him behind in a state of great unpreparedness. She was not in the least uneasy about him, as she knew that after he had started from home he would have to call in at a barber's and have a shave.

The marriage of A. and his bride could not truthfully be described as a fashionable one. She looked something like a rough diamond, the most prominent part of her apparel being a large lilac apron! From such a bride too much was not to be expected. It was when in the vestry and the pen was presented to her to sign the register, that she asked in surprise, "Have I got to make a chalk?"

SECTION XIV

ECCENTRICITIES AT MARRIAGES

“Trifles make the sum of human things
And half our misery from foibles springs.”

DR. JOHNSON.

THERE are many strange and unlovely characters in the world, and it has been our lot to have to do with a few of them. A very mixed assembly has been gathered into this section. An exhibition of eccentricity or peculiarity of some kind has been the guiding principle in making these selections.

Our first specimens are men who have been born and brought up in a Christian land, but who, by their actions, proved they were but little better than ignorant heathen, and were destitute of all feelings of reverence when in the House of God.

The marriage of A. had been postponed through a disreputable cause, and at the time finally arranged for the marriage to take place a second couple were desirous to be united. Whilst all were waiting the arrival of the latter party, the stillness of the church was disturbed by the scratching and cracking as of a match being struck. Arriving at the spot from whence the sound proceeded, the writer found that in order to while away a few moments, A. was preparing to light his pipe!

On Sunday mornings, marriages were solemnised immediately after the eight o'clock celebration of the Holy Communion; and it was an ordinary occurrence for the bridal parties to assemble in church as that service was drawing towards its close, the pew-opener placing them in seats at a distance from the communicants. On the morning when C. was married, two other wedding parties were present at the same time. They had all arrived early, and were able to hear the latter part of the sacramental service. Imagine our astonishment and disgust on approaching the

pews wherein the three groups were seated, to discover that one of the men, leaning forward in the pew, was attentively listening to the closing prayers, and at the same time smoking his pipe !

Four months after K. had buried her husband she was in the midst of the bustle consequent upon the preparation for her second marriage. In the exuberance of her joy at the prospect, she had no wish for the pleasure to be confined to herself, but longed that her "dear departed" could share in it. When giving notice for her marriage she thought of him she had lost, and said, "I only wish that my poor husband could know that I am going to be married to Mr. ——; he would be so pleased."

A widower, about three score years old, who came to be married, allowed his dog to accompany the party into the chancel; and although it was running about there, no attempt was made to remove it until its presence was complained of.

It is almost as difficult to imagine a bride-

groom in the prime and vigour of healthful manhood to be cold physically even on a frosty wedding day, as it is to believe that a loving bridegroom could possibly be cold in his affections on such an invigorating occasion. Yet such was the condition of N., a widower, aged thirty-seven, at the time of his marriage with a blooming young widow. When the robed minister stood with book in hand ready to commence the service, N. found he had a request to make. The writer being near him he gave him this commission: "Tell him to make haste, as I am perished with cold."

From the remarks made by the bridegroom and the "daddy" to a bride, as she stood between the two before the communion rails, ready to engage in the service, one might have imagined that she had some reluctance in accepting a second husband in the person of V., who was a bachelor, six years older than herself. He said to her, "There's time for repentance." Hearing this, the man on her left chimed in, "You've got time to repent even now." Had she, at the spur of the

moment, taken them at their word and given signs of repentance, they would have looked rather silly.

It was Christmas-tide, and, as is usual at that holiday season, several marriages were being solemnised at the same time. A country labourer awaiting his turn to be married, and glancing at the large-typed office-book the writer was using, showed that he possessed keenness of perception by pointing to a word in the service, and suggesting the alteration of one letter. With a self-satisfied grin, he said, "They should alter that"—pointing to the letter "v"—"and put 'k' instead." Country bumpkin though he was, he knew the effect such a change would produce. It would completely alter the whole intent and purport of the marriage service, and make it next to useless. Instead of requiring pledges that are intended to remain inviolable until death brings about a separation, the substitution of the letter he suggested would enable parties merely to promise that they would live together so long as they both should *like*. We know there are

many persons, not the most estimable, who would readily applaud the suggestion, and consider it a very agreeable one.

A. and S. were both deaf and dumb. The groom had been deaf and dumb from his birth. The bride had been so from the time she was three years of age, when a severe illness deprived her of the faculties of speech and hearing. They had been acquainted with each other from childhood, and had quietly courted three or four years. The minister whose duty it was to conduct their marriage had timely notice of the interesting event, so that, if requisite, he might prepare himself for the emergencies of the case ; it being absolutely needful that he should not only know, but have a certain amount of readiness in using and in receiving communications in the deaf and dumb alphabet.

The reverend gentleman made good use of the opportunity thus afforded. First of all, he became proficient in the alphabet, his wife did likewise ; and then the happy pair had some interesting and very quiet rehearsals in troth-plighting, so that by the time

appointed for the marriage they were quite *au fait*. The portions of the service that were silently gone through with the fingers were the espousals, the mutual stipulation, and the declaration with the ring. There was every reason to believe the couple followed intelligently, and performed their own parts accurately, conscientiously, and with gravity. When fourteen years had nearly passed, S. reappeared as a bride. A widower who could both hear and speak had decided to make her his wife. Have we not here one of the enigmas of life? Women, too numerous to number, goodly in appearance, with every faculty in full exercise, are passed by, are overlooked, and are unable to obtain one husband; while deaf and dumb women can secure two, and cross-eyed young women three!

One of the most painful spectacles the writer has witnessed in connection with marriages was presented by B. and H. They were both great cripples. The man was twenty-four, the woman a few years older. With labour and difficulty, and the aid of a crutch, H. reached the church,

and to accomplish the same journey the man required the aid of a couple of supporters. One of his legs was badly bent, causing much wriggling and effort in effecting locomotion. The woman was crippled in hand and in foot. When the time came to present the ring, the finger had to be pulled away from the palm, and then when she presented it—oh! what a picture!—all the fingers were very wide apart, pointing in different directions, an exact model of a hand as sketched in chalk upon the pavement by a street urchin. To witness the contortions of the two as they moved down the aisle was torturing. “It made me feel quite bad to see them,” said a woman in the church. A gentleman who happened to be present when they were leaving was amazed when told what service they had just engaged in, and he said, “I thought their object had been to return thanks for mercies received”—a reasonable supposition. After protesting against such an union, he consoled himself with the thought that “nothing can come of such a marriage,” little imagining the newly-wedded pair already

had two children, and were expecting a third. The feelings that oppressed onlookers were not shared by themselves ; so jubilant were they that colours were displayed from a window of their house in honour of the occasion. Of course they had their sympathisers, but the most impressive testimonial we heard from one of their apologists was, " They can't help their crippledness." The return journey was too much for the bride ; she could not quite reach her home by walking, so she was taken up and carried ! In less than three and a half years this extraordinary bridegroom married again, the second bride being twelve years older than himself. All the arrangements for the marriage were left to her. When introducing him for entry in the banns book she considered it needful to be apologetic. She said, " He is a widower, and his wife has been dead eighteen months. It's a charity to take him, and I'm taking him for the sake of the two poor children. He's a cripple, he is dirty, and got nobody to do anything for him. I'm like a lost sheep—got nobody to care for me. I've

no doubt I shall be comfortable ; if I ain't I must take the consequences."

In addition to the numerous friends who accompanied and formed the marriage party of C. and his bride were a number of sight-seers. Amongst these outsiders an unwelcome visitor appeared—a noted character, who was in some degree under the influence of drink. When he was observed, he had quietly taken a seat in the chancel. He promised to be perfectly quiet ; and although his request for a prayer-book was not acceded to, it was subsequently found he had obtained possession of one, and was intently following the service. Nothing noticeable transpired until the clergyman had uttered the closing sentences of the opening address, "If any man can show any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace." To the surprise of all, the intruder leaned over the front of his seat, and audibly addressing the clergyman, said, "I've no objection."

Sunshine as an accompaniment at marriage

is always welcome, but not always obtained. Sometimes showers descend at such times. At D.'s marriage a terrible thunderstorm raged from the time he and his party left home until they returned. It was tropical in its violence, for over an inch of rain fell whilst they were in the church. The water, not being able to flow away fast enough, entered the sacred building, so that immediately after the termination of the marriage the spot whereon the wedding party had been standing was flooded. Though the lightning flashes were brilliant, and the thunder peals sounded intensely solemn whilst the service was proceeding, the young bride was not impressed. There appeared to be sunshine and calm within her, for amidst all the solemnities of service and storm she—giggled!

SECTION XV

DISREPUTABLE CHARACTERS

“Perchance it is a Fate appointed hearse,
Bearing away to some mysterious tomb,
Or Limbo of the scornful universe,
The joy, the peace, the life-hope, the abortions
Of all things good which should have been our portions,
But have been strangled by the City’s curse.”

JAMES THOMPSON.

IN every large town, without an exception, there exists a low and disreputable portion of the population that is a disgrace to the community. This class, in varying numbers, is everywhere to be met with ; even small communities are not quite exempted from its objectionable presence. As was therefore to be expected, we have not been exempted ; this unsatisfactory residuum has contributed its un-

welcome quota to the limited circle of persons, whose sayings and doings in connection with their marriage form the topics of this book.

Sad proofs have been given by these individuals of the degrading and contaminating power of vice. They have shown that at times, when with them all should be joy and tranquillity, and when a certain respectful reverence for certain places and religious ordinances should be observed, the evil genius of their lives has been present and made itself apparent in various disreputable ways, holding undisputed sway over some and robbing them of the blessings within their reach.

Some of the scenes enacted by themselves, or the friends who have accompanied them, have been, when viewed from either a social or religious standpoint, distressingly painful and even disgusting. The most objectionable will consequently not be described. The instances given will suffice to illustrate its strength to blight the choicest gifts, turn them into curses, and prove the truth of the declaration in the best of books, the Bible, "the wicked

are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. lvii. 20, 21).

The truthfulness of the picture drawn by the Psalmist, "Unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known," was clearly seen in the ways and doings of a young couple. At the time when life usually—purity holding the sway—yields real enjoyments and pleasures to those who seek and use them aright, these two were tasting the bitter fruit of ungodly living. The man was but twenty years old, and at the time of entering the banns he was under the influence of drink, and the young woman burdened with a babe in her arms. The spectacle not only revealed the past, but gave evil promise for the future. As if to complete the evidence of their degradation, the pair jangled, in the writer's presence, on the eve of their wedding-day.

One of the most startling instances of early depravity was given by A. and L. A lady discovered the shocking condition in which

they were living, and took active means to bring the scandal to an end. The facts she discovered were these: A. was twenty years of age, and the young woman sixteen. At that youthful age the latter was a mother with two children living. Such was their condition when this lady induced and assisted them to get married.

A spectacle of degradation was witnessed when B. and M. came to church to be married. Early in the morning—soon after nine though it was—the wretched young man was thoroughly intoxicated; and his equally miserable bride, nineteen years of age, was near confinement. A most deplorable condition this for a pair to be in at the time that ought and might have been one of the very brightest periods of their lives. To engage in a religious service of any kind under such conditions was so disgusting it could not for a moment be thought of, and the clergyman declined to have anything to do with them then. It was piteous to hear the pleadings of the bride and the bridesmaid, to induce the minister to perform the marriage, as

“she had not an hour to call her own.” Compliance then was out of the question, it was simply impossible ; common decency, to say nothing more, forbade it, and consequently the clergyman left them. As the two women were still such importunate pleaders, they were advised by one who pitied them to take the bridegroom at once to some chemist, place him in his sobering hands, afterwards conduct him home, let him have a sleep, and see what the result would be. If he became more presentable later in the day a decision would then be come to as to whether the couple were to be married that day or not. The advice was acted upon, and at the time stated the party reappeared in church. They were conducted into the vestry, where they underwent a private examination by the clergyman, and received the counsel they so sorely stood in need of. The combined influence of the chemical and the clerical attention he had received had a sobering and subduing effect upon this ill-trained bridegroom. Permission to engage in the service was with some hesita-

tion given, and A. and M. went through it as well as might have been expected under such unpromising circumstances.

When perusing these pages some kind-hearted apologist may be ready to say, "Ah! doubtless intoxication is one of the results for which we have to thank the extension of the hours for marriage. To allow marriage to take place in the afternoon may be very well for the upper classes, who know how to conduct themselves on such occasions, but it works mischievously with the lower orders to allow them to marry at so late an hour. The day being one of excitement, and a holiday with them, public-houses are visited, and some people are anything but sober when it is time for them to go to church." This plea would not apply to the above-mentioned groom.

All the instances that have been given were bad enough; but when the picture is reversed and the woman is the lover of intoxicants it assumes a darker hue, and is still more repulsive. What can a man be thinking of, and what may he expect, when he marries a woman

who is fond of drink? Amongst the men who have been foolish enough to make such a fearful blunder was F. The woman he chose for his wife was frivolous, very often thirsty, and much too fond of taking it in refreshers. The levity of her character could be detected at her first interview. When she gave notice for the marriage on the eve of her wedding-day, and was asked the name of the man she was going to marry, or rather be married to, she first gave the name of another individual, and then correcting herself, said, "I forgot, its ——." On the morrow, on entering the church she laughed outright, and was instantly reprov'd and cautioned. She then replied, "I can't help it; I've had a glass of gin, and I'm rather tight." She was advised to conduct herself properly, and was given to understand that if the clergyman saw any irreverent conduct he would refuse to marry her. Her immediate rejoinder was, "If he won't, my husband must."

One could not avoid the impression that the religious sentimentalism shown by M. and his

bride was little better than "sounding brass," and their pretensions of goodness but as a "tinkling cymbal." At their marriage the bride was eighteen, and had then been confirmed six weeks. On hearing the minister in the blessing say these words, "That ye may so live together in this life that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting," M. loudly ejaculated, "Bless the Lord, I hope we may." In the second year of their marriage, one of this unsatisfactory pair spent three months in prison.

SECTION XVI

ANOMALOUS COUPLES

“Where the strong is betrothed to the weak,
And the stern in sweet marriage is blent with the meek,
Rings the concord harmonious, both tender and strong.”

SCHILLER.

“There are many bright things in this world of ours,
Rare weeds, and strange plants, that prove precious
flowers,
Little dreamt of by you, or by me.”—ANON.

It will now be our duty to present to the reader a selection of loving couples who externally bore an incongruous appearance, and to all outward seeming were oddly blended.

Our “pairs” have been sufficiently numerous to yield wondrous variety of oddities amongst them, wide contrasts have been observed; contrasts in age, in stature, in station, in con-

dition, in colour, and in intellectual attainments. Persons of different nationalities have pledged their troth. Cripples of various sorts and degrees have found persons blessed with health and the use of all their faculties, willing to accept them as partners for life. This has appeared extraordinary, but Providence has ordained that the dispositions and inclinations of the human race should have endless diversity, so that all persons, as well as most things, obtain notice, receive attention, and are all sharers of a certain amount of admiration and love. Were the bodily infirmities of individuals to place them outside the pale of affection, their lot in life would be doubly embittered, and rendered less bearable. Still we must confess there have been at the communion rails those who from their malformation, or from accident, or their unsavouriness, have caused, at first sight, a revulsion of feeling which has set us wondering wherein lay the attractiveness that had been detected and esteemed by the lovers who came to church to make such peculiar treasures their own.

An offer of marriage reached A. twenty years too late to allow her to indulge in over fastidiousness. He was a widower of fifty, industrious, had a little business and a humble little home, but he was jet black. One morning in December, when Nature had spread a white carpet of snow for him to walk upon, he escorted his third bride to church, and made her his own. Between these two espousals, the writer had the honour of presenting a young woman of twenty-five in marriage to a black of true negro type. He remembers a third instance, when a spinster of twenty-two was married to a man of colour.

That poor old ladies with financial and matrimonial prospects at a low ebb, should, with reluctance, accept a coloured man, we can understand; but we must confess surprise on finding a comely English maiden, eighteen years of age, with life's possibilities before her, having a taste so perverted as to be willing to have a South American Negro. Yet she married him.

After viewing S.'s choice, one could feel

composure when observing the little hump-backed dwarf another lady had accepted.

The attractions possessed by the little gem that won the admiration of H. would perhaps have remained undiscovered a considerable time, had he not detected them ; or, if detected, might not have received the full appreciation he was able to give them. She was a dwarf.

Now for a couple whose proportions outraged all the rules of symmetry and placed topsy-turveydom in the ascendant. The bridegroom was a poor little weak stripling of a man, quite insignificant in appearance. The bride was six feet three, and had a brother who was seven feet six inches, and weighed thirty-four stone. His individuality was so remarkable that he was presented to her Majesty at Buckingham Palace, and had the honour of receiving from the Queen a valuable souvenir of the interview.

M. was one of Nature's unfortunates. He had possession of all his limbs ; but his feet were not only clubbed, but were turned in a wrong direction. The toes, instead of pointing

the same way as the nose, faced each other. Notwithstanding this serious defect, on attaining his majority he readily found a wife.

Amongst the many couples of unequal position, both pecuniarily and intellectually, who have been married in the writer's presence were a clergyman's son, brought up amid the refined surroundings of his family, and a poor country labourer's daughter. Another instance of a still more striking character was that of the Rector of a parish who married the daughter of a farm labourer, who was forty-two years younger than himself. They lived happily together many years, and were blessed with a numerous family.

SECTION XVII

AGES AT MARRIAGES

“ Old men young women wed—by way of nurses ;
Young men old women—just to fill their purses ;
Nor young men only—for 'tis my belief
(Nor do I think the metaphor a bold one),
When folkes in life turn over a new *leaf*,
Why very few would grumble at a *gold one* ! ”

THE law of England allows a boy, as soon as he has arrived at the age of fourteen years, to become a husband ; and a girl twelve years of age, to become a wife. The law *allows*, but who at the close of the nineteenth century would be foolish enough to permit their children to marry at such tender ages ? In feudal times it was a different matter. Necessity was then a compelling power, and demanded many unpleasant services and sacrifices. Jeaffreson, in

his "Brides and Bridals," says, in reference to those times, that the commonweal required for the safety and vigorous government of the country, that every knightly estate should have its heir ready to step into his sire's place and armour; social sentiment approved a matrimonial system that threw beardless striplings into matrimony, and made men grandfathers before they were forty years old. Although times and circumstances have completely changed, the law remains the same. In the year 1606, Robert, Earl of Essex, was married to Lady Frances Howard when he was barely fourteen years of age, and the age of his bride was thirteen. More recent instances might be given. With Jews, a young man might be given in marriage after he had completed his thirteenth year and a day; and a virgin when she was twelve years and one day old. The males, however, were commonly married at the age of eighteen; but even then it was much too early. No one in England, Jew or Gentile, outside the walls of a lunatic asylum would now think of advising or encouraging

young people, twelve and fourteen years of age, to become husbands and wives, and undertake responsibilities they were unfit for and quite unable to perform.

Many and weighty reasons might be advanced against marriages at so early an age. Dr. A. Combe gives physiological reasons. He says that the period of the life at which parents marry exercises a great influence on the health and qualities of the offspring. If parents have married at a very early age, and before full development and maturity of their own organism, the children generally are more deficient in stamina than those born subsequently, and under more favourable circumstances. This, indeed, is one of the reasons why children of the same family often present considerable differences of constitution and character, and why the firstborn is occasionally puny in an otherwise vigorous race. Marriage, therefore, never ought to take place before maturity. In this country it may be stated, as a general rule, that females do not attain their full development before from twenty to twenty-

five years of age, and males from twenty-five to thirty. But in defiance of this fact, it is not uncommon to encourage a precocious and delicate creature to marry at sixteen or seventeen years of age, at the manifest risk, not only of entailing infirm health upon herself and her future offspring, but of throwing away the best chance of her own permanent happiness.

Maynard, in his little book upon matrimony, remarks that "while premature marriages are seen to diminish the happiness of wedded life as viewed from their *physiological* point of observation, they are also seen to do the same when viewed under the *domestic* appearance; that is, especially in relation to the working classes. We regard it as an essential element in the enjoyment of conjugal life, that there be the possession of the necessaries, and, at least, some of the comforts of life in the form of food, raiment, and furniture. Where young men inherit no fortune, and have to work for their maintenance, the cases are but few in which they can have saved enough to get married comfortably at a very early period of life.

Were they to make up their minds to be industrious, temperate, and frugal, to postpone their matrimonial alliances until they have furnished themselves with a good stock of clothes, saved enough to furnish their houses comfortably, and get around them all the implements of their trade, and then, free from debt, and possessed of all necessaries of life, oh ! what a beautiful start on the ocean of life they would make, and how happy they might be. And then, too, young women should not be in haste to get married, until they are well supplied with suitable raiment, and have a few pounds upon which they can place their hand as their own, in order to obtain many little things which their change of life would require, and which could be done without making an immediate appeal to their husbands. Too many young persons, instead of acting thus prudently, rush hastily into matrimony when the whim prompts them and the opportunity presents itself, without careful thought and preparation. They thus plunge into difficulties, and bring troubles and anxieties upon their relatives,

besides depriving themselves of the residue of the pleasure and the freedom from cares, that rightly belong to their youthful years."

The youngest of the grooms who have enlisted our services was a youth, who had in his own estimation quite outrun his years. At his marriage he claimed to be eighteen, but the subsequent testimony of his father and of the baptismal register proved that he was but sixteen. His bride stated that her age was eighteen.

On referring to our list we find that no less than fifteen of these go-ahead youths have *waited* until they were quite seventeen before they felt the necessity of taking to themselves wives.

We are fully prepared to hear of the capabilities of young women. In such a matter as marriage, of course, they could not allow themselves to be outrivalled in years by the lads. Not one, however, of our ten thousand brides has acknowledged her years were less than sixteen.

At that early age, nineteen of these pre-

cocious young women became wives. Advance only one year, and the select group of eighteen is exchanged for a little crowd of one hundred and forty. At the age of eighteen the number advanced to five hundred and seventy-six.

Our attention being directed to widowers we found that amongst the number the most juvenile at the time of his second marriage had attained the experienced age of twenty! And this after a protracted widowhood of nearly a whole year! This persevering, enterprising graduate in matrimonial degrees has no compeer at his age in our long-extended ranks.

Less isolated are the widowers whose second marriage was delayed until they had completed the twenty-first year of their age, as there are no less than five claimants to this notable position. The widowers who were married a second time when at the age of twenty-two, were also five in number.

After a most diligent search we must confess we have failed to find one widow who relinquished her widowhood for another husband before she had attained the age of nineteen.

Our marriages of widows, when twenty years of age, have numbered seven.

Widows who plighted their troth for the second time when they were twenty-one muster exactly a baker's dozen. Eleven others waited until they were twenty-two before they took to themselves second husbands.

Amongst the many widows who re-entered married life when twenty-three years of age, we will select one for special notice. She deserves honourable mention for indomitable perseverance. When she was twenty-three years old she was married not to her second but to her third husband!

We now withdraw from the spring-tide of life to the winter of age.

Among our ten thousand are three veteran bachelors who claim attention. In his seventy-second year the eldest of these fell a victim to a spinster of fifty-four. Our second brave was in his sixty-seventh year when he married. The third was sixty-six years.

Young spinsters have a great propensity for believing they ought to be older than they are.

On the other hand, we find ancient spinsters, when matrimonially inclined, have a proneness to overlook some of their later years. These having multiplied and become so numerous, they think some of them may well be spared and laid aside. The most intrepid acknowledgment of years by a spinster that we have had was sixty-seven; its nearest approach being sixty-four, and it has been made in two instances. Sixty-seven, therefore, we may take as the age when the last matrimonial chance for spinsters is likely to arrive. A fourth lady confessed she was allowed to remain "on the shelf" until sixty-one summers had passed. A fifth stated she had spent fifty-nine winters in single blessedness. These five treasures, ripe in experience of the world's unappreciativeness and in years, were discovered and made happy by active widowers, whose ages were considered respectable, ranging as they did from half to three-quarters of a century.

Venerable widowers have mustered more strongly. We begin at seventy, and find that eight at that age gallantly rebuckled their

armour and went forth to show the world what they were able to accomplish. Of widowers at seventy-one years of age, we have had four ; two at seventy-two, three at seventy-three, five at seventy-four, three at seventy-five, two at seventy-six, two at seventy-seven, one at seventy-nine, one at eighty, two at eighty-one. Of the ladies who had the honour of being selected by these thirty stout hearts, the youngest was a spinster thirty-five years of age, and the eldest a widow of seventy-five.

The difference of age between the youngest and the oldest bachelor recorded in these pages is fifty-five years, the youngest being sixteen and the oldest seventy-one.

With the widowers the range of years is still wider. The younger is separated from the elder by the vast distance of sixty-one years ; the former being in the fresh springtime of life—twenty, the latter in the winter of venerable age—eighty-one.

Among our battalions of spinsters we find their ages compass a period of fifty-one years

between the most juvenile and the most ancient, namely sixteen and sixty-seven.

The widows run the widowers pretty close in their range of years, being only five less. They began one year earlier, and discontinued marrying—so they informed us—six years sooner than the widowers have done. Our youngest and most alluring widow was nineteen; our most venerable seventy-five—a difference of fifty-six years.

We now combine the ages of our youngest bachelor and spinster couples, and find they yield a total of thirty-three years. The boy bridegrooms were each seventeen, and their youthful brides sixteen.

Passing from the most presuming to the most procrastinating couple, the contrast we meet with is startling. Instead of their ages amounting to less than forty, we find them mounting up to one hundred and twenty-two years! The bachelor was sixty-three, and his spinster bride fifty-nine.

The ages of widowers and widows next engage our attention, taking the youngest

couple first. We have had two couples who ran a dead heat in their united years, the total being forty-two. In one instance the widower and his widow-bride were each of them twenty-one. Their rivals were twenty-two and twenty respectively. This young man of twenty-two had been a widower three years, and his bride a widow six weeks!

The united ages of our most venerable widower and widow at their marriage amounted to one hundred and fifty-two years!

In the faithful records of English history, we are told the number of the wives of King Henry VIII. was limited to six. It is a long while since that active monarch lived, and we have no occasion to go back three hundred and fifty years for the purpose of finding an individual whose matrimonial experience was on so large a scale. Our own times suffice, indeed, our select company has produced a man who married six wives and had the mournful duty to inter all of them. Five of the entries in our marriage registers may be found in the years 1836, 1850, 1866, 1867, and 1873, and the

sixth in the register of a neighbouring parish. It appears that this much married man commenced his matrimonial career at seventeen years of age, for his sixth wife he selected a girl of seventeen, at the time when he was fifty-six. Then he became a widower for the sixth time, his wife living only six and a half years.

SECTION XVIII

GRAND WEDDINGS

“O Love, be moderate, allay thy ecstasy,
In measure rein thy joy, scant this excess.”

SHAKESPEARE.

AMONGST ten thousand brides and bridegrooms drawn from the population of a country town a variety of classes would be represented, including those possessing wealth and influence. When marriages of members of the latter section are solemnised they usually excite very general interest, the details connected with the ceremony being made so attractive that multitudes of onlookers are drawn together to witness them. Being the central point of attraction, the church and its approaches are thronged on such occasions with eager sight-seers. To ladies such marriages have peculiar

interest. In order to obtain a good position in the church to witness a fashionable wedding ladies arrive long before the appointed time, and with commendable calmness await the advent of the wedding party. Visible relief is manifested when the first detachment appears in sight. Each fresh arrival is scanned with close attention, and the interest increases in intensity until its climax is reached on the bride and her maids making their appearance. Then a large number of ladies are so elated by the spectacle they are witnessing they, for the moment, forget they are in the house of God, their minds becoming so absorbed and "on the whirl" they appear as if they had suddenly been transplanted into a lady's paradise—a showroom where the newest, most costly, and beautiful costumes are exhibited. The activity of those who are not favoured with front positions becomes so great, and their determination not to be baulked so decisive, they cannot remain standing upon the floor of the pews but must mount upon the seats, and unless prevented, maintain this unseemly

position as long as the attractive scene continues, to the banishment of all reverential demeanour, the detriment of seat cushions, and the indignation of all right-minded persons, including the pew-openers, who are also the pew-cleaners. By their extreme anxiety and their intensity of gaze, it appears most essential that every lady in the assembly should there and then ascertain with minuteness how the bridesmaids are apparelled, as well as how the bride herself is adorned, and the manner in which she comports herself. Gentlemen, of course, are present in smaller numbers than the ladies, and having no special interest in the tints and style of the costumes of the wedding party, are more at liberty to watch and scrutinise the general proceedings. Some have at such times amused themselves by wondering how many of the unmarried damsels present were wishing themselves in the bride's position, and whether any of the keen watchers were afflicted with the "sour grape" malady.

Being at a considerable distance from centres where the fashionable world congregate, but

few marriages of the class under consideration have been solemnised in our church. When they have taken place the excitement has been sufficiently great to draw about three thousand persons within the sacred precincts. On one occasion there was a goodly military display ; on another the church was lavishly decorated with choice flowers from conservatories.

One little incident that occurred we think worthy of a place among our anecdotes. The church was very crowded, and when the service was about to commence a thought entered the mind of a lady that so charmed her she at once acted upon it. Seeing that the pulpit held a commanding position from which an uninterrupted view of the proceedings could be obtained, she ascended the flight of stairs and was comfortably arranging herself therein, when the eye of the vicar caught sight of the intruder, and he declined to commence the service until she had made an ignominious retreat.

SECTION XIX

BRIDESMAIDS

“On her two pretty bridesmaids did attend,
Which on her waited, things amiss to mend.”

SPENSER.

IN the good old times, before the railway era, when marriage festivities were continued through several days by the leading classes of society, the duties of bridesmaids were very onerous. In our own days, even amid the circle of the upper ten thousand, such proceedings are not prolonged beyond the day of the nuptials ; the bridegroom and bride taking their departure very shortly after the marriage ceremony, the exactions made upon bridesmaids are comparatively light. In the middle and lower ranks of life, the first and most

momentous of the duties of the ladies selected by the brides to accompany them to church, is to hold earnest and frequent consultations respecting the shades of the dresses and the style of the hats the bridesmaids themselves shall wear on the great occasion. Descending the social scale we soon find ourselves among the classes undisturbed by tint of dress and previous preparation, contented with donning, when the time arrived, their decent Sunday apparel, with some new adjunct, in honour of the occasion. A still lower step brings us to the residuum, whose Sunday clothes differ only in the slightest degree from those they appear in throughout the week, and whose preparation to appear officially at a marriage consists chiefly in a wash and brush up. The lower classes have chiefly provided the subject matter of this section.

Ellen's bridesmaid was one of those forward persons who interfere with matters that do not in the least concern them. As soon as the party arrived at the communion rails, her unwelcome activity led her to disarrange the

party. As the service progressed she acted as if fully convinced no one present knew its requirements as well as she did.

It was the same with Hannah's bridesmaid ; she assumed the *rôle* of directress-general, bride and bridegroom receiving orders and directions from her as if she were a governess directing the movements of her pupils.

The self-estimation of Mary Ann's bridesmaid was apparent. When the minister asked, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" it was so difficult for her to keep quiet that she immediately said "I do." As no notice was taken of her intrusive utterance, she absurdly felt it was necessary to repeat it.

The bridesmaid that attended Emma actually kept the ring in her possession until the clergyman asked the bridegroom for it. He was unable to comply, and the reason was at once seen. The bridesmaid produced it from her pocket, and instead of giving it to the groom, passed it to the "daddy" who gave the bride away ; he transferred it to the bridegroom, the groom presented it to the parson, the parson

returned it to him, and he then gave it to the bride, wedding her therewith. The ring in this extraordinary way made the circuit of the wedding party.

Other bridesmaids who have set the rules of propriety aside, are those who have dressed themselves exactly like the brides they have accompanied. The spectacle presented on such occasions has been as if the bridegroom were attended by two young women who were equally willing to become his wife, and as if he had not finally made up his mind as to which of the two he would choose, and that either of them was prepared to be the accepted one. It is a mistake for young women to indulge in such counterfeit representations ; they tend to produce inconvenient blunders. In one of these instances, the bridesmaid actually occupied the position of the bride at the beginning of the service, and remained there until after the espousal question had been answered and the time came for the groom to take the latter by the hand and plight his troth to her. This he hesitated to do, and then, by the voluntary

shifting of places by the bridesmaid and the bride, the true position became apparent, and it was seen that a strange misunderstanding had taken place.

The two bridesmaids who attended Sarah's wedding thought their appearance would be very pleasing were they to go to church with nothing upon their heads ; so they appeared when they entered the sacred building just as they intended to present themselves at the wedding-breakfast table. But they soon discovered what a mistake they had made in leaving their bonnets (or hats) at home. They were told that they could not be allowed to take part in the service in such a condition ; that they must cover their heads. One of the two misguided ones in the emergency put a shawl over her head, and the other sought relief in placing her pocket-handkerchief there and tying it under her chin.

Errors in judgment have been shown in other ways. Elizabeth was married when Nature was wearing its wintry garment—a thick overcoat of December snow. It was at

such a time quite chilling enough to see a bride perambulating her way to church in a white dress ; but to see her bridesmaid in white also was a great deal too much to view with composure : it was really the last straw ; and the best thing then to enable the observer to recover his equanimity was to forget the silly wearers, and draw comparisons between the white of nature and the white of art.

When engaged at home in domestic duties, or when in service, it is pleasant to see a sprightly young woman wearing a clean, white apron ; it gives her a tidy appearance and the impress of a worker. When the wearer has to appear in public it is customary, even on a working day, to lay the useful article aside for the time. Such being the usual method, we must claim singularity for the action of Rosina's bridesmaid, who came, on a Sunday morning, wearing one of her whitest and best week-day aprons. It certainly gave her a clean, but not a festive appearance.

Margaret's bridesmaid could not be charged with wasting either time or money when

making preparation to attend her marriage. The leading feature of the costume in which she presented herself in church was a large apron, and a shawl over her head.

What are the duties of a bridesmaid when in church? Is her presence there to be simply ornamental? Is she to be merely a witness of what goes on? Is she there to be waited on, or is she to be, as her title indicates, a maid of the bride, her helper and attendant? These questions are asked because many bridesmaids have conducted themselves as if nothing were expected of them beyond being spectators of the marriage. True it is this is their chief occupation, and is nearly all that brides require of them.

Alice chose a bridesmaid who was able to make the visit to the church serve a double purpose, by engaging in two services at the communion rails. One of these was not to get married herself, as she had then been a wife ten years, and had become the rejoicing mother of a family. The fact was, she had recently added another "olive branch" to the family

stock, and not having yet returned public thanks to God for merciful deliverance, the clergyman was asked to "church" her a few minutes before she stood at the same place to fill the office of a bridesmaid.

Our next party for introduction is one of quite a different character, it presents a dissimilar scene, and favours us with a plethora of bridesmaids. It comprised ten individuals, eight bridesmaids, eight ladies to watch over and take care of the bride, and not a single gentleman to support the groom! What intrepidity on his part! What responsibility! To be the sun and centre of attraction to a galaxy of ladies! To have every action closely watched by nine interested ladies; to have them listening to his every word—when not talking or whispering among themselves; to be observed of nine delightful and delighted observers, was, if a trifle exacting, really a proud position to occupy; but it exhibited bravery deserving recognition: bravery that many brave men would be unequal to. Make such men acquainted with the fact that were they to get

married they must go to church accompanied by nine ladies, and not a single gentleman, and not a few would shrink from undergoing such an ordeal ; were it possible for them ever to show the white feather, it would be in evidence then, and they would be able to give incontrovertible reasons against having to endure so great an infliction.

Instead of a bevy of bridesmaids, A., at her marriage was attended by gentlemen only. The bridegroom was a bachelor who had entered upon his fiftieth year, and he naturally required the sympathetic presence of gentlemen when making so new and important a departure. He was supported by three friends, whilst the bride, strong in the courage begotten by practical experience in matrimonial matters, set aside the adventitious aid of bridesmaids, and relied on her own unaided resources. Other brides have presented themselves who have dispensed with the services of their own sex at their marriage. But all such marriage parties lack symmetry, and present a very lopsided appearance.

SECTION XX

CLERICAL RENDERING OF THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

“The priestly brotherhood, devout, sincere.”

COWPER.

THE number of the clergy who solemnised these marriages was one hundred and eighty-four. These included gentlemen of various ages and of varied experiences and position in the Church.

The rendering of the marriage service by so large a number could not fail to present a good field for observation, and afford a favourable opportunity to a calm observer of realising the requirements of this scriptural and important service. While all ordinances require the minister's reverent attention, this one specially

demands it. No other of the Church's occasional services so requires the exercise of a well-balanced judgment as this does. For instance, we know by experience that it is possible so to give the charge to the persons to be married as to cause its impressiveness to be lost in a feeling of repulsiveness. An earnest, well-meaning clergyman so rendered it once that he made the bride and bridegroom feel like criminals at a bar of justice. Had there been grave suspicions that something was wrong, and that a confession of it ought then to be made, his manner would have been justified. But no such doubts troubled him or any one else. He was quite unconscious that he was anything more than impressive; he intended no more than that. His mistake was, he had ascended Sinai instead of taking his stand on the Mount of Beatitudes, from which he could have breathed forth a calm, hallowed, and beneficent spirit—the spirit of the marriage service.

Much depends upon the manner in which the service is performed. When the officiating

minister runs through it, as if racing against time, or engages in it in a cold, unsympathetic manner, or acts carelessly, as if the whole thing were a bother to him, then, as a matter of course, much of the elevating effect and religious influence the benign and strictly scriptural service produces when efficiently rendered is in a great measure lost.

One of the most correct and impressive renderings of an important part of this most beautiful of all marriage services was made by a totally blind clergyman when officiating at his son's wedding. He was assisted by a minister who was deaf, and who was ready to act as prompter should necessity require it, but his services in that capacity was not needed. All that was necessary for him to do was to perform his part as arranged, to give the opening address and take the devotional portion. The essential portions of the marriage ceremony were taken in the most precise and accurate manner by the gentleman who was unfortunately deprived of sight.

No office of devotion, however perfect or

however scriptural, can be expected to please or satisfy everybody. The first suggestion then that we venture to offer is the omission of fourteen words in the opening address to the assembled congregation, commencing with the words "to satisfy." Their excision would not in the least degree impair the service, and at the same time would remove what to some minds has a semblance of indelicacy. The next suggestion is of less weight and importance. Its adoption would make it just a little more difficult for a few self-willed brides to practice self-deception when engaged in the service. It is simply expunging the word "to," the last time it occurs in the bride's form of stipulation, making it "and obey" instead of "and to obey." This seems trifling, but we think the change might be advisable, as some brides have endeavoured to render the expression meaningless by saying "and tobey." They foolishly imagined they had thus freed themselves from the obligation of obedience to their husbands, when they had done nothing of the kind, as not two minutes had passed since the

solemn promise had been given to the clergyman that they would obey their husbands. It is the first requisite named by him in the second of the two questions asked: and it is expected that the last specific promise the brides make to their grooms in the service should be in accord with it.

Our third suggestion has reference to the word "worship" the groom has to use when presenting the ring. Not understanding the true significance of the term, men are unnecessarily troubled and exercised in their minds about it, believing they have been led to express greater regard or reverence for their brides than they ought to feel or entertain; that none but the Supreme Being ought to be worshipped; that however great or intense their love may be, it would be utterly wrong to make their wives objects of worship. But as the word is likely to remain in the service, and thousands of bridegrooms will be required to utter it, it may be well for the easement and enlightenment of some of their minds to assure them that in using that word the Church has

required nothing wrong or unlawful to be declared. The spirit of the Bible guides and animates the whole service, and at the time of its compilation in its present form, the word *worship* meant or signified exactly what we now understand by the word *honour*. That it was so is evident by the following quotation from the great Bible that was printed in 1541. In 1 Sam. ii. we find the following passage: "The Lorde sayth them that worshyp me I wyl worshyp." The same passage in the Authorised Version of the Bible, and also in the Revised Version, is as follows: "The Lord saith them that honour me I will honour." Compare Psa. viii. 5 in the Prayer Book with the same verse in the Bible.

There is no occasional service within the covers of the Prayer Book that young clergymen have to engage in that more fully demands their closest attention from the beginning to its close; nor is there any other—excepting perhaps the one when quite half a dozen babies at the font are in the most determined manner exercising their lungs—that has the tendency

to draw their eyes from the office book and divert their minds from the subject.

The officiating minister has carefully to guard against making unfortunate slips in connection with the ring. We have known the little golden hoop to be asked for *before* the bridegroom had plighted his troth, and it proved a great inconvenience. We have seen the groom prevented from placing the ring upon the minister's book, and heard the bride absurdly requested to perform that part of the ceremony. On one occasion, a clergyman was so nervous that on receiving the ring he was puzzled to know what to do with it, and found relief by placing it upon the bride's finger himself! Imagine the impression produced when a clergyman, instead of asking the bridegroom for the ring, renewed the question, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" Also, when another minister arrived at the same part of the service he said "Let us pray." One question we heard asked was, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this wife?" A minister instead of saying, as he intended,

“Place the bride’s right hand in mine,” said
“Place my right hand in hers.” Another said,
“Just give her my right hand.” A bridegroom
was led to inform his bride that he was taking
her according to God’s “commandment.”
Another very singular slip was, “Those whom
God hath joined asunder let no man put
asunder.” Equally remarkable in its way was
the joining the hand of the groom with the
hand of the man who gave the bride away,
and saying, “Those whom God hath joined
together.” This occurred after asking the
bride, “Mary Ann, wilt thou have this woman
to thy wedded husband?”

Two Psalms have been provided in the
marriage service. The 128th being placed
before the 67th, for an obvious reason. To
thoughtful and sensitive persons, what could
have been more ridiculous than to hear minister
and clerk glibly, and with much assurance,
reciting in the ears of bridegrooms, who had
wisely selected brides on the shady side of
fifty, “Thy wife shall be as the fruitful
vine upon the walls of thy house ; thy chil-

dren like the olive-branches round about thy table? ”

On one occasion when there were two marriages to be solemnised, a young clergyman was present, in order to obtain an insight into the mode of conducting the service, before undertaking the duty himself. That he might not be a mere spectator, he read the opening address to the congregation, and in his desire to make the service, as he thought, meet the requirements of the occasion, he altered a sentence rendering it, “into which holy estate these four persons present come now together to be joined.” On another occasion, a clergyman, through not adhering to the strict letter of the service, became a trifle confused in one of the prayers, and asked, “that both these men and these women may so love their wives, as Christ did love his spouse the Church.”

To sum up in a few words. What is the deduction that ought to be drawn from this section? Not so much that carelessness has been exposed as the important fact, that the marriage service being so diverse from all the

other services of the Church, special preparation is the most essential before engaging in its ministration, and that during the solemnisation calm and careful attention to all its details is *on every occasion* demanded.

SECTION XXI

BRIDEGROOMS' ESPOUSAL RESPONSES

“Wedlock hath oft compared been
To public feasts, where meet a public rout,
Where they that are without would fain go in,
And they that are within would fain go out.”

FIRST of all, as we are all aware, the espousal question is asked the bridegroom. Wheatley says, “the solemnisation of matrimony being a formal compact, it is requisite, in the first place that the mutual consent of the parties be now asked, which is so essentially necessary, that the marriage is not good without it. And therefore we find that Rebekah’s friends asked her consent before they sent her away to Isaac (Genesis xxiv. 58, 59). And in the firmest kind of marriage amongst the Romans, which they called co-emption, the parties themselves

mutually asked this of each other. This therefore being so momentous a custom, is for that reason taken into the Christian offices. Only among Christians the question is proposed by the priest, so that the declaration may be the more solemn, as being made in the immediate presence of God, and to His deputed minister."

The man is first required to declare his willingness to have the bride for his wife ; and promise that he will do all things necessary for her welfare, so long as they both shall live. These are all included in the two questions, "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy state of matrimony ? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health, and forsaking all other keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live ?" His answer to these inquiries is to be, "I will." Short though this response be, some of our unsophisticated bridegrooms have given a still shorter one by answering, "Yes."

Just as little shamefaced boys nod their heads as an equivalent for an answer, so did

James use his head on that great occasion in his life.

Please listen to the one bright, cheery, conclusive answer given by Charles : " Yes, sir, yes, sir ; I will, sir, I will."

The answer that Henry gave was " Yes, sir, yes, sir ; I'm willing. Well, I will."

Stephen listened attentively to the recital of the two important questions, and at their termination signified his assent in the one word, " Yes." He was requested to say, " I will " ; but instead of this he again said, " Yes." Once again the clergyman told him to answer " I will." Then the perverse fellow said " Amen."

A man named Tongue made answer, " Oh yes, she's all right enough."

Henry replied, " Yes, so long as she is a good girl, or else I'll turn her up."

Charles said, " Yes, I will, by God."

William said, " That's all right."

When Edward replied, " I will, sir," the clergyman said to him, " Don't say 'sir,' you are speaking to God ; ' I will,' say." E. immediately responded, " I will, sir."

Robert said, "Well I will."

When Alfred was asked the question, he turned to the bride and said, "Will you get up in the morning and clean my boots?"

William said, "I dunno about that: if we went to the Workhouse they'd part us."

Samuel was not left to his own unaided resources, but was favoured with the presence of his father, his mother, and his sister at his marriage. Their support was not superfluous, he needed all the help they could afford him. When the questions were asked that required the simplest of answers, he didn't know what to say, so he held his tongue "and spake nothing." His mother, believing herself well qualified to help in such a matter, told him to say "Yes." His father next chimed in, and, with more correctness, bade him answer "I will." He acted upon the superior advice of his father, spake the two important words, and began to feel more manly. Presently he found an opportunity of showing the advance he was making, by promptly answering, "I will," to the bride's betrothal questions.

Some brides, as we have seen, have been kept in brief suspense at a critical moment, by nervous and sluggish-brained bridegrooms. Such, however, was not Emma's experience—hers was quite of an opposite character. She was standing, as brides have to do, between two gentlemen when engaged in the service. The instant the clergyman asked the important questions, both her supporters unhesitatingly answered, "I will." Both said they would have her. Fortunately for the bridegroom the intrusive declaration of his friend came too late to cause him any trouble. No official notice was taken of the interruption. Instead of the friend's unexpected claim, or offer, to have the bride being inquired into, he was presently asked to give her away, so that she might become the wife of Benjamin.

A curious instance of premature responding by a groom and his bride took place on an occasion when two happy couples were present at the same time for marriage. Each couple, of course, were married separately, the opening address, the Psalm, and the prayers serving

collectively. These two marriage groups were standing about eight feet apart. When the minister was uniting the first pair he, as a matter of necessity, stood close in front of them, on his asking the bridegroom the betrothal question, "Henry, wilt thou have this woman," &c., the distant bridegroom and bride both answered, with a distinctness that the clergyman might hear, "I will," much to the surprise of all who heard them. It sounded ridiculous, and was most absurd. They had patiently to wait till their turn came.

Isaiah was explanatory. As he could not feel certain what the ministerial construction would be upon the answer he had given, he informed the reverend gentleman that in saying "Yes," he meant, "I will."

The explanation given by John was apologetic. He became prematurely responsive. At the termination of the first clause of the query, his readiness for response was shown. Without waiting to hear further conditions and requirements, as soon as he was asked, "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?"

his compliance was expressed in these words, "Yes, sir ; I will, sir." At the close, when all the conditions had been asked, and the clergyman told him the right answer to give, he replied, "I ain't got no larning."

SECTION XXII

BRIDES' ESPOUSAL RESPONSES

“Speak it not lightly!— tis a holy thing,
A bond enduring through long distant years.”

“Speak it not lightly ! though the young and gay
Are thronging round thee with tones of mirth,
Let not the holy promise of to-day
Fade like the clouds that with the morn have birth ;
But ever bright and sacred may it be,
Stored in the treasure-cell of memory.”

THE bride is now individually and personally addressed by name by the officiating minister, and required with her own mouth to give her willing consent to have the bridegroom to her wedded husband, and promise faithfulness to him. The two questions put to her for her acceptance differ but little from those just presented and replied to by the bridegroom.

The wives who faithfully keep their bridal vows often realise by happy experience the truth of the maxim, "An obedient wife commands her husband." Wheatley, when explaining these espousal questions, says, "There is no difference in the Duties, nor consequently in the Terms of the Covenant between the Man and his Wife: except that the Woman is oblig'd to *obey* and *serve* her Husband. Nor is this a difference of our own devising, but is expressly ordered by God himself, who in those places of scripture where he enjoins Husbands to love their Wives, commands the Wives to be *subject* and *obedient* to their Husbands. The rules also of society make it necessary; for Equality, saith *St. Chrysostom*, breeds contention, and one of the two must be superior, or else both would strive for the Dominion. Wherefore the Laws of God, and the Wisdom of all Nations hath given the Superiority to the Husband. Among the *Romans* the Wife was oblig'd by Law to be subject to her Husband, and to call him *Lord*. But then they had a peculiar Magis-

trate to take care that the Men did not abuse this power, but that they should rule over their Wives with gentleness and tenderness."

Brides, as a rule, have been familiar with the responses they would be required to make ; but many of them have lacked the power to give audible expression to these. The gift of speech with some appeared to be a suspended faculty. Doubtless on their returning into the fresh air of the world, with a new life before them, the power was quickly and fully restored. One of these feeble ones was Maria. No sound of human voice could be heard by those standing by her. Her answer being awaited, and apparently not forthcoming, the bridegroom said to her, " Say, ' I will. ' " She instantly retorted, " I did say it. " The recovery was not maintained by the time she had to give her troth ; her voice had not merely descended into almost imperceptible mumbling, but became mum, altogether mum, before the completion. In a commanding and unsympathetic tone, the bridegroom urged her to " Go on. " She did " go on " ; but as matters

subsequently turned out, it would have been better for her had she gone off.

Ellen was not a thoughtless young lady in her teens, but was entering matrimonial life when in her thirty-first year; we may therefore conclude she had had sufficient time and abundant opportunities of becoming conversant with the marriage service. But it was obvious they had been allowed to pass unimproved, with the result that she knew as little about it as that ignorant creature, man. The result of her negligence soon became apparent. When asked these all-embracing questions, she did not know what to say, so she gave no answer. Silence is sometimes believed to give consent, but no such imperfect way of indicating acquiescence can be allowed on such a critical occasion. She was therefore requested to give due expression in an unmistakable affirmative, but instead of the ordinary "I will," of the service, she gave an extraordinary response, and said, "Amen." There is no doubt the assent required was really inside that word, but as she was a bride, and

not a parish clerk, she found it was necessary for her to keep in the old, beaten path, and leave "Amen" to him.

Emma was not to be congratulated upon the husband she had accepted, or upon her future prospects. The impression her bridegroom gave whilst engaged in the service was anything but pleasing and satisfactory. He appeared, so far as could be judged by his behaviour, to be an ill-bred, coarse, vulgar fellow, destitute of good sense and the desire to acquit himself in a decent and becoming manner. Until reproved by the minister, he kept both his hands deep down in his trouser pockets, and behaved irreverently. On hearing the bride give her assent to the espousal questions, he had the bad taste and ill-manners to draw her attention to what she then had done. "Do you hear that?" was his uncouth question to her, intending, we suppose, to direct her especial consideration to the promise she then made, that she would love, honour, and obey him. The clergyman, not approving of this rude interruption, and probably sym-

pathising with the bride, said to him, "You are not required to speak:" and the man replied gruffly, "I don't think that makes much difference." He was advised not to do it again, and was told, "When you are quite steady, I'll begin again." This check quieted him, and there was no further trouble.

SECTION XXIII

GIVING THE BRIDE AWAY

Sir Oliver. "Is there none here to give the woman?"

Touchstone. "I will not take her on gift of any man."

Sir Oliver. "Truly she must be given, or the marriage is not lawful."

As You Like It.

BLUNT, in his "Key to the Prayer Book," says :
"The minister asks, according to very ancient custom, 'Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?' Upon which the woman is delivered over by her father, or his representative, to the Church, and by the Church (represented by the priest) delivered over to her future husband. The independence of woman is not recognised by the law of God, and therefore not by the Church of God.

The father's authority over her is delivered up to God who gave it, and then transferred by God to the husband, who is the head of the wife, and who, by Divine ordinance, is to rule over her. Such follies as are talked of under the name of woman's rights are always associated with infidelity, and are contrary to the principles on which God has founded the relation of woman to man."

Favoured with this light and information, we can follow with a clear insight the meaning of the formality now proceeding.

Unavoidable circumstances have often prevented the father from filling his rightful position on these important occasions. Death has been one of the many causes that have necessitated a deputy to fill his place. Whoever the chosen person may have been, the appropriate title of "daddy" has been popularly bestowed upon him. His being several years younger than the bride has made no difference, the title has not been withheld on that account.

Some of these individuals have highly appreciated the honour that has been conferred

upon them in being selected to fill the interesting post. One of them said when in the vestry, "It is better than selling pots and pans." Another gave expression to the delight that was simmering within him, by tapping a tune with his heel upon the stone floor. One, on arrival, made known the high official position he had been called to fill by saying, "I gives the gal away." While some of these gentlemen have heard the animating question asked by the clergyman unmoved, others have realised that a moment of distinction for them had arrived in having a great duty to perform. When the minister has asked, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" the full height of their stature has been seen, and the sum total of their dignity has been made known. "Mr. George N——n," instantly answered one of these self-satisfied gentlemen, convinced that nothing short of his full title should be given. Another, less assured, asked the reverend gentleman, "Do you require the name?" He replied "No ; do you give her? Hand her to me." Another, on hearing the

inquiry, replied, "Me," just as a little boy answers when asked, "Who's there?" Owen not only responded in like manner, but held up his hand in schoolboy fashion.

Many "daddies" who have presented themselves at the altar have not had the slightest inkling of the duty they were expected to perform. When the question has been asked, "Who giveth this woman," &c., they have attempted nothing, but have stood still and stared vacantly; and when told what to do have presented a bewildered appearance. Some, on awakening into activity, have acted impractically, by offering first their own right hands, then their left, to the clergyman, or by trying to get possession themselves of the reverend gentleman's hand. Others, with a clearer comprehension, have obtained one of the bride's hands, and it has often been her left, instead of her right. The mistake some have made has been the passing the bride's hand to the bridegroom instead of to the minister. Some have not merely passed, but retained possession of her hand as long as

possible, as if loth to part with it : one going to the extreme length of not relinquishing his hold until both groom and bride had given their troth. Another took both bride and groom by their right hands to join them. On hearing the interrogation, some have shown their readiness by word as well as by deed. "I'll do that little job for her," replied one. Another said, "I do, and good luck go with her." One, on the bride offering him her left hand, took her right, saying, "This is the hand, mor." Instead of presenting the woman's hand to the minister, one showed how much he knew of his duty by merely shaking the bride's hand and letting it go.

The official duty being so exceedingly simple, we once had a curate who felt no sympathy whatever with hesitating or blundering "daddies." He scrupled not to make known to them his sense of their deficiencies, in brief and forcible sentences, such as "I don't want your hand ; give me hers." "You ought to know the right hand from the left." One of these men, on being told by him to give the

bride's right hand, said to him, "I don't care which hand." The curate replied, "I do."

Much diversity of character has been shown by these individuals. Most have conducted themselves with great propriety, some with levity; and some have officiously interfered with matters that did not concern them. Others there have been who have realised so fully the spirit they believed should animate them while filling their temporary position, that they have tended fatherly advice to grooms to aid them in the service. For instance, one said, "You listen, John, to all as the gentleman says to you." John was forty-one, and he was listening just as a man of that age ought to listen. "Speak up, George; say 'I will,'" was the urgent recommendation of another. Observing hesitancy in the bridegroom, Hannah's "daddy" said to him, with blunt peremptoriness, "Answer that, man; answer that, man. Why don't you speak?" Another, on finding that Samuel, though thirty-three years of age, did not know

what to say when asked whether he would have Catherine to his wedded wife, advised him with much confidence "Yes, say yes." "Speak up, go on," was the incitement another bridegroom received.

To a faltering bride, her "daddy" said, "You must say it, or go home again." When the clergyman was ready to receive the ring from Robert, the watchful and interested "daddy" said "Ring, Rob." Another, to throw light into George's beclouded mind, said to him, "You want to say that George, 'With this ring.'" One, in his wisdom, told the groom "not to put the ring on all the way." Another, seeing the ring had safely reached the bride's finger, could not refrain from saying, "This job's pretty well done now." One, observing how slow the progress the groom was making advised him just "to damp the ring" to accelerate its progress down the finger; and another—the busybody kind of daddy, who knows so much, and "likes to have a finger in every pie"—mistaking his position altogether, prevented the groom from

placing the ring upon the minister's book by taking it from him and laying it on the book himself.

Some "daddies" have acted as apologists for the bridegrooms. "He can't say that," said one, when the young man was told to say, "and thereto I plight thee my troth." Another apologised for the groom, who was behaving foolishly, by saying, "He's only joking," as if he thought joking quite permissible in such a service.

Signs of abstraction, as well as of elation, have been given by some of these important individuals. Sarah Jane's daddy blended his voice with hers in saying after the minister "I Sarah Jane." When George Thomas began to plight his troth, the gentleman present as "daddy" began to do likewise. He was checked by the minister. His name being Oscar Frederick, did not prevent him from saying abstractedly, "I, George Thomas." Could it be he had been wishing himself in George Thomas's place?

The anxiety some have shown, and the

special efforts they have made to be the first after the marriage to kiss the bride, will be found in a subsequent section.

A degree of interest having probably been awakened in the mind of the reader by the statement made upon the title-page respecting the number of brides the writer gave away in marriage ; we think a few words explanatory of such unusual activity will be expected. The causes that produced it were many and various. Economical considerations prevailed very largely, and were responsible for the majority of instances. Lovers of quietude found it the most effective means of obtaining it. Relatives unable to leave work, and others who at the time were at a distance from the town and unable to attend the marriages, contributed to swell the number. The ladies presented were representatives of nearly all sorts and conditions of females of the middle and lower classes of society, whose ages ranged from sixteen to seventy years. The gentlemen who accepted the brides were widely representative, a Norwegian, a Swede, a Dutchman,

a Belgian, a North German, and jet black Negroes being amongst them. Of Englishmen there were divers grades, from Clerks in Holy Orders, and Esquires, down to a worthless tramp. Among the more notable presentations were—

A spinster to a Clerk in Holy Orders, forty-two years older than herself.

A widow of forty-nine to a widower aged eighty-one years and nine months.

A widow, six feet three inches in height, to a bachelor sixty-six years of age and very much shorter than his bride.

Two spinsters (one aged twenty-nine) to two men in dying condition.

A spinster aged forty-one to a groom, aged fifty, who had, on leaving the church, the sum of one shilling and one halfpenny to meet his new requirements.

A spinster pauper from a workhouse to a wandering tramp.

A smiling spinster, aged twenty-two, to a wooden-legged groom.

A widow to a gipsy.

A spinster of twenty-five to a jet black negro.

Within the space of twelve months, a young woman was presented to two husbands.

Brides No. 5 and No. 6 to a man who was married six times!

SECTION XXIV

BRIDEGROOMS AND BRIDES JOINING HANDS

“Soft is the palm of the delicate woman ;
Hard is the hand of the rough, sturdy yeoman ;
Soft palm or hard hand, it mattereth never,
Give me the grasp that is friendly for ever !”

AFTER the minister has received the bride from her father or friend, he, having the disposal of her, delivers her into the possession of the bridegroom, as he afterwards does the bridegroom into the possession of the bride, by causing each of them to take the other by the right hand. The joining of hands, Wheatley goes on to say, naturally signifies contracting friendship and making a covenant: and the right hand especially was esteemed so sacred, that Cicero calls it the *Witness of our*

Faith. And, therefore, the joining of these being in all covenants, no wonder it should be observed in the solemn one of marriage. Accordingly we find it has been used on this occasion by heathens, Jews, and Christians in all ages.

Before the bridegroom commences his troth-plighting, and before the bride begins hers, the Rubric requires that they should, in each case, take the other by the right hand, and retain their grasp while each repeats, after the minister, the appointed formula. As the reverend gentleman, on receiving the bride's right hand, passes it at once into the bridegroom's right hand, it is seldom that any hitch has occurred in that part of the ceremony; all has been plain and clear for the bridegroom to proceed at once. It has been when he has plighted his troth and releases his grasp, and the bride has been told to take his hand, that perplexity has occurred. Many have supposed that they should then join their left hands, and have attempted to do so. In some instances the man has offered his right hand, and the

woman has presented her left, and on being told "the other hand," the bridegroom, as well as bride, has taken the hint, with the result that the former presented his left, and the latter her right hand. It has been both surprising and amusing to observe the embarrassment many have felt when required to perform this simple action. One could scarcely have believed that so much difficulty could have arisen in connection with such an everyday act as the grasping of right hands; or that there could have been so much variety in the way of attempting it, had not experience proved it to be otherwise. But the truth is, nervousness fills weak minds with confusion, and causes the most commonplace actions to become perplexing. Why, lovers, when they have had the opportunity, have grasped each other by the right hand every day, and found nothing easier of accomplishment. But after much pleasant practice, tell them officially in the marriage service to do it, and eccentric instead of concentric movements of their hands have been often seen.

For the prevention of mutual disturbance at this part of the ceremonial the best method of procedure is for the clergyman, the instant the bridegroom has plighted his troth, to take him and the bride both by the wrist; gently separate their hands, and whilst retaining his hold, say to the bride, "Now you take him by his hand." The regrasping is then calmly made, no opportunity for the display of nervous abstraction is given, and the service proceeds with composure.

When the bridegroom has completed his troth-plighting, he immediately withdraws his hand; and the bride in her turn is required to take him by his right hand. Ofttimes ministers when directing the movements have said, "Join them together again." One thick-headed groom then joined his own hands together!

Amongst our ten thousand brides, Julia holds a unique position owing to the manner in which she presented her right hand for acceptance. When the bridegroom was bidden to take her hand she held it forth, but in so

strange a manner as not to admit of its being grasped. She closed it, and presented a clenched fist! James made no attempt to open it, but allowed it to remain clenched, and he held her by the wrist. The same peculiarity was observable when their hands should have been joined at the ratification of their marriage.

SECTION XXV

BRIDEGROOMS PLIGHTING THEIR TROTH

“They each to each pronounce the sacred vow
That binds them to each other here below.”

HAVING presented the bride to the bridegroom, and caused them to join their right hands, the minister, in the first instance, directs the man and then the woman to give troth by a mutual stipulation, each naming him or herself and specifying the other as the individual person chosen to be his or her wedded husband or wife. The manner of taking is expressed in the ancient form of words, “to have and to hold,” used in every deed of conveyance, “and therefore,” says Wheatley, “they ought not to be omitted here, because the man and the woman are now to put themselves into the

power and possession of each other (1 Cor. vii. 4). The time of possessing each other is from the nuptial day to the close of their mutual lives. And lest any inconveniences appearing afterwards should be alleged for the breaking of this sacred contract, here is added a protestation that the obligation shall continue in full force, notwithstanding any future unexpected changes. They are to have and to hold, for better for worse, in respect of their mind and manners ; for richer for poorer, in respect of their estate ; and whether in sickness or in health, in respect of their body. In all these conditions the engagement is the same, viz., the man is to love and cherish his wife, and the woman is to love, cherish, and obey her husband ; *i.e.*, each of them must have the same regard for the other, and perform their several duties, whatsoever accidental varieties may happen, until death part them ; and then the whole is ratified in the ancient form, ‘and thereto I plight’ (as the man says) or (as the woman) ‘I give thee my troth’ ; *i.e.*, for the performance of all that has been said, each of

them puts his or her faith or truth to pledge : as much as if each had said, ' If I perform not the covenant I have made, let me forfeit my credit, and never be counted just or honest or faithful more.' "

The compilers of our office carefully rejected all that was objectionable in the old manuals, and prepared the form as it now appears in our Prayer Book.

It has been a matter of interest to note the various degrees of confidence or bashfulness that have been shown by men at this great juncture. The courage of some of our braves has oozed out at their finger ends on having officially to take their brides by her hand ; and they have, by the significant act, been brought into so powerless a condition that they have scarcely been able to articulate the short form of words of betrothal. Some of them have retained sufficient energy to plight their troth in a subdued whisper ; as if they were being compelled, against their will, to do something they much dreaded, although they came to church for the specific purpose of doing it.

And they have passed the brief period of betrothal in a mental condition so peculiar that they have not realised with absolute certainty whether they were standing on their feet or not. A few of them, under these loose, or ought we not rather to say, contracted conditions, have been as ridiculously ready to do the bride's part as nervously as they performed their own; calling themselves Sarah Jane, or any other names that might be mentioned by the clergyman. But these depressed individuals have been preferable to some self-asserting men who vulgarly proclaimed their important presence by raising their voices high above the clergyman's, as if they were addressing the whole assembly in the church. Of this class was James. Had his bride been stone deaf, or, had she been standing at a distance of two hundred feet from him, he need not have spoken louder. He may have thought it brave, but it was very bad taste, to say nothing of its irreverence. It is a great mistake for any one to imagine that troth-plighting should be performed in a bold, ora-

torical manner. A calm, clear, respectful utterance is desirable, and should be made by all. But so many disturbing influences have presented themselves that but comparatively few persons have attained to this perfection. Some have had to check a giggling tendency, others have had their inward commotion relieved by tears, and with eyes thus bedewed have made important assertions. In most the mind lost, for a time, its equilibrium, from some cause or other; in some instances they have been "on the slant," through having imbibed something stronger than water. But nervousness has been responsible for most, and ignorance for many of the extraordinary words spoken, and the strange deeds recorded in this book; we therefore plead that too harsh a judgment may not be passed upon them by the reader. Could we possibly imagine a censorious individual would be amongst the readers of this book, we would say to such an one: "Before you proceed further please get your Bible and reflect for five minutes

upon Rom. xv. 1, and, if personally contemplating marriage, take a useful hint from Gal. vi. 1."

Betrothal moments were found to be very trying to James, and consequently he lacked the precision that is so much to be desired at such an elating time. When taking Georgiana to be his wedded wife, his pronouncement was, "I, James, take thee George Hammer to my wedding wife."

There was an excuse ready at hand for John. How could a timorous young man, when under the full sway of nervousness, possibly remember, and repeat with accuracy at the first attempt, three Christian names? John tried to get over the obstacle, and made short work of it by skipping the first two names and mentioning only the last. These omissions caused his announcement to sound very objectionable. He said "I, John, take this Anguish to my wedded wife." Anguish was the woman's third Christian name.

Samuel was a difficult fellow to start troth-plighting. Before the minister could get him

fairly off he had to ask him four times to say, "I, Samuel." He persistently said, "I am Samuel." None questioned the fact, we all knew that he was Samuel. Poor Sammy at length stated that he took Mary Ann, "to have and behold" from that day forward.

One of the hard ones to start in a becoming manner was John Elijah. When the minister said to him, "Say after me, 'I, John Elijah,'" John Elijah's response was, "Yes." "Say, 'I, John Elijah,'" he was again bidden. "John Elijah," was his response. "You must say, 'I, John Elijah,'" said the clergyman. He then said it. There was no necessity to prompt his bride three times, after the first time of asking she said, "I, Kate, take thy John Elijah."

A stinging reproof was administered to Edward, and he richly deserved it. He was so lost to a sense of propriety as to see no harm in being on the giggle when in the midst of a serious engagement. Twice the clergyman had bidden him to say, "I, Edward," and his giggling prevented him from saying it.

Seeing this, his bride, whose conduct in church was, like that of the man, anything but exemplary, said to him, "I never saw such a fool in my life!" Who could wish for, or expect, a more damaging testimony from a bride at such a moment than that? How pleasant to have one's character sketched in such bold outline by a lady who was waiting to be betrothed! How reassuring to the tittering groom. It was equivalent to saying, "I am ready and waiting to be married to the biggest fool I have ever seen." After hearing the bride depict his character so graphically, and being thus assured, Edward, without further levity or hesitation, made his censurer his wedded wife.

When another groom allowed an ominous pause to follow the introduction, "I, Thomas," the bride, who was a vigorous widow, twenty-two years of age, and in no mood to tolerate unnecessary pauses, instantly instructed him to proceed. Her spirited command was, "Take thee, Elizabeth—go on!" Thomas took her "according to God's holy words."

When the part of the service was reached that required George to be articulate, the "daddy" caused something akin to consternation to be felt by intimating to the minister that the bridegroom was both "deaf and dumb." This was a startling discovery at such an inopportune moment, as, of course, in such circumstances, no preparation had been made to meet so difficult a case, and it seemed, for the moment, that a postponement would be necessary, the minister not being acquainted with the deaf and dumb alphabet. When remonstrated with for negligence in not making the difficulty known beforehand, the bride said she "hadn't given such a thing a thought." The "daddy," on seeing what a crisis his information had produced, tried to relieve it by saying "He *can* read." But the reading abilities of a deaf and dumb man seemed little to the purpose, and afforded a poor prospect of relief. However, as it was the only straw thrown out, it was laid hold of; and it was decided to place the book in George's hand, to see what could be done by him and with him. When the words that

bridegrooms have to repeat were shown to him, it was delightfully surprising to hear this "dumb" man speak every word with sufficient distinctness to satisfy all requirements.

With all William's readiness to plight his troth and make Sarah Elizabeth his own, he found some difficulty to do it correctly. Instead of saying, as taught by the minister, "I, William, take thee, Sarah Elizabeth," &c., with the greatest cheerfulness and confidence he said, "I will, sir, take this Sarah Elizabeth to my wedded wife."

Joseph's intellectual capacity was very limited. He said, "I, Joseph, take thee, Jane, to my wedding wife, have and to go."

It is a pity when bridegrooms are disposed to be respectful to the ministers who marry them that any of them should overshoot the mark and make their efforts appear ridiculous, as did William: "I, William, sir, take thee, Amelia, sir, to my wedded wife, sir, to have and to hold, sir, from this day forward, sir;" and so on, repeating the "sir" nine times.

James, when plighting his troth, said he took

his bride, "till this day fortnight," instead of "from this day forward." A stern rebuke from the clergyman, instantly banished all feelings of levity from him.

When the minister said to Edward Barber, "I, Edward," in order that he might repeat the same after him, he replied, "Barber." Again he was prompted "I, Edward," and again the response was "Barber."

William was a very rambling and unsatisfactory troth-plighter; and his deafness was partly accountable for it. Instead of "to have and to hold" he thought it right to say "to have her unto home," and "till death come to pass" instead of, "till death us do part." He finished by plighting his "trust."

The domestic duties of a husband, as understood, or rather expressed, by Walter, were quite beyond the reach of ordinary intelligence. When he was taking Elizabeth "to my married wife," he promised that he would "larrup and cherish her." Henry was more explicit when plighting his troth to Frances. He distinctly

stated that he was taking her "for batter for wus—to learn and cherish." Robert told Georgiana that he took her "for better not worse." Edward declared that he was taking Eliza "to nurse and to cherish."

Brightness and pleasure in his home appeared to be anticipated by William when he said, "I, William, take thee, Sarah—to laugh and to cherish."

William had special intentions respecting his bride's future. He said, "I, William, take these Susannah to my wedding wife, to reserve and to behold."

Joseph took Charlotte "according to God's *only* ordinance." The statement made by William when troth-plighting, "I, William, take thee, Elizabeth, with my wedded wife," was something quite out of the common.

Mark deviated from the prescribed form. He asserted that he was taking Emily "to add and to hold."

We will now notice three or four singularities of action that served as accompaniments to the plighting of troths.

R. was described by his bride as "a bashful young man." He did not put in an appearance until necessity compelled him to do so ; but left all the preliminaries of the marriage to be attended to and arranged by the bride, who was thirteen years younger than himself. Being bashful, this young man in his thirty-fourth year, wished to have a quiet marriage, undisturbed by the presence of one unnecessary spectator. He thought that as the clerk would necessarily be present, he might be made serviceable in reducing the number of witnesses, by his being engaged to give the bride away. R.'s wish was gratified ; there was not one extra individual to witness the marriage, only the number required by the law. This respectable but nervous young man consequently had the finest opportunity that could be afforded him of exhibiting bravery in troth-plighting, and it was highly interesting to observe the degree he attained to. The pressure of the strain he was undergoing was evident. He derived great help and support in closing his eyes every time, and at

the very instant of opening his mouth, not allowing the daylight to re-enter until the last word had been spoken. By this expedient he was able to make solemn promises, and undergo a great change in condition, without seeing or noticing anybody.

Mr. Head nodded his head approvingly at every sentence, until nearing the close of his troth-plighting, which was of no ordinary character. He declared that he took "Sarah and Sarah Ann—for this day forward—according to God's olens ordice," &c.

The right hands of some of our bridegrooms have shown high appreciation of what has fallen from their lips when addressing their brides, each sentence being accompanied by a vigorous shake of the bride's hand, quite sufficient to dispel any doubt that might be lingering, and make her realise how full of vitality the promises were.

William's method differed from all these ; it was a speciality. He neither shut his eyes, nodded his head, nor shook hands, but found solace from one of his heels. Some bride-

grooms have obtained this by shaking one or both legs; but William's heel produced the accompaniment he required. As the decisive words were slowly spoken, his right boot was engaged in tapping the stone floor, producing a clinking sound that he probably found helpful in so great a crisis. Robert sustained himself during the trying moments by stroking his nose in a soothing manner, using his left hand for the purpose when his right hand was officially engaged.

Other grooms have emphasised their words with a droll waggle of their heads, such as ducks give after rising from a dive.

SECTION XXVI

BRIDES GIVING THEIR TROTH

“That hallowed sphere, a woman’s heart, contains
Empires of feeling, and the rich domains
Where love, disporting in his sunniest hours,
Breathes his sweet incense o’er ambrosial flowers.”

BIRD.

“O Love, I give myself to thee,
Thine ever, only thine to be.”

WE have reached that portion of the marriage service in which brides have found the least pleasure. It is the part that has been the most difficult for them to get through, notwithstanding its being the portion that gave them the opportunity of hearing their own voices.

As before observed, some gave indications that they were undergoing a temporary suspension of their vocal powers. In others there were signs of unusual depression in their com-

municative faculties. Speaking generally of the ten thousand, only a comparatively small number were able to do more than whisper when making one of the most important pronouncements of their lives. Occasionally one presented herself who spoke with sufficient clearness that all near at hand could hear the words. Such brides have almost invariably belonged to the classes that have received the benefit of education, and were able to comprehend the meaning of the words they spoke. Some profited by the good example set them by their grooms, in plighting their troths in a pleasantly audible and becoming manner. This has been creditable to themselves and gratifying to their friends. To give their troth as if they were doing so entirely against their own wills, or, as if they were revealing some dreadful secret that would incriminate somebody, is not worthy of pure, honest-hearted English brides. To require something akin to goading to induce them to do the very thing they had long been wishing for, and for which they presented themselves in church, was ridiculous. Still, it would not be

fair to be too hard upon them, or expect too much from them, remembering, as we do, the extraordinary condition into which some of their bridegrooms were reduced. We ought not, then, to be astonished at finding brides under the disturbing influence of tittering, or crying, and some of them hysterically passing from one to the other. A few brides have disturbed the proceedings in a very unbecoming and inconvenient manner by various degrees of fainting. Indeed, the little winged god of love has much to answer for, before, at, and after marriage. Some of his *protégés* have played curious pranks when under his influence, and some of their singularities have most unfortunately been in evidence whilst they have been engaged in the crowning act of their wedding-day. To these and other cognate sources we are indebted for the whimsical peculiarities and eccentricities recorded in these pages.

It is a common experience to find amongst the lower classes that the brides are more ready and conversant with the marriage service than their bridegrooms. Many of the former have

not only been quite ready to perform their own part but sufficiently versed in the service to extricate their grooms when they have got into difficulties.

Lydia indulged in a preliminary show of bashfulness as soon as her turn came to respond after the minister. When bidden to say, "I, Lydia," she was silent. On being again told, she coyly remarked, "I can't say it." The reverend gentleman then said, "You must say it." No response came. The man who had just given her away urged her in vain. Once again the clergyman led the way with, "I, Lydia." Then she started, and went gaily on without let or hindrance, and seemed equal to all requirements of the marriage service.

Fully three-quarters of an hour elapsed before Elizabeth gave her troth to her groom after he had plighted his to her. It was a singular affair. Stupidity reigned supreme during those forty-five minutes. The whole marriage party lacked perspicacity in a remarkable degree. The bride was deaf, and in that simple fact lay the whole secret of the complicated difficulty

that arose. The clergyman not being aware of the woman's infirmity, and, strangely failing to discover it, continued speaking to her in a subdued tone just above a whisper—it being especially necessary, as three other clergymen were within the communion rails engaged in marrying. When the bride was required to give her troth, she, not hearing what the minister said, made no response. The unaccountable part of the affair was, that neither the bride nor any of her friends explained to the clergyman that she was deaf, consequently he continued speaking quietly to her, and she remained silent, looking more and more agitated and confused. Instead of divining the cause, the reverend gentleman imagined that she was, as he himself expressed it, “in a kind of faint.” Progress, of course, was retarded, and the service came to a standstill, until all the other marriage parties had left the church.

Deafness, though a misfortune, is occasionally found convenient. Emily, a young lady of twenty-three, thus utilised it at her marriage. Being deaf, and thoroughly acquainted with the

marriage service, she went on her troth-giving way ahead of the minister, conveniently omitting the word "obey." The reverend gentleman detected the omission and checked her onward career. He wished to have the imperfect sentence rectified. There was some difficulty in bringing her back, and getting her to correct the omission.

In another case it looked very much as though a young person, named Sarah, had resolved to omit the promise of obedience if possible, and had arranged in her mind a plan by which the omission might pass unobserved. As soon as she was directed to say, "I, Sarah, take thee, William," she ran the minister a race, keeping a little in advance of him, and significantly omitting the sentence containing the little word that is considered so objectionable by ladies possessing a strong will of their own.

A bride had the assurance just before the marriage rite began, to tell us, in the hearing of the marriage party, that she intended to practise a little self-deceit in the service. She did not mean to omit, as Sarah did, the word

"obey," but jesuitically take the sting out of it, as she thought, by substituting the word "nobey."¹

The desire to rule over their husbands,² did not originate with the wives of the nineteenth century. Before their great-grandmothers were born there were ladies in the world who exhibited strong inclinations of that kind. Good old Latimer, when preaching his last sermon before King Edward VI. and his Court at Westminster, in Lent in the year 1550, said, "Achab was a king, but Jezebel, she was the perilous woman. She would rule her husband, the king; she would bear a stroke in all things, and she would

¹ In the marriage vow of the woman the modern phrase "to obey" is substituted for the obsolete one, "to be buxom," or "boughsome" (that is *pliant*), which had the same meaning. It implies that although the woman's dependence on, and obedience to, her father has been given up by him into God's hands, it is only that it may be given over to her husband.

² We have read it was suggested that at the marriage of her Majesty Queen Victoria, the word "obey" might be left out of her response. On hearing of this piece of snobbery, her Majesty instantly checked it, and declared that she would be married "like any other woman."

order matters as pleased her. And so will many women do ; they will rule their husbands, and do all things after their own minds. They do therein against the order by God appointed them ; they break their injunction that God gave unto them. Yea, it is now come to the lower sort, to mean men's wives ; they will rule and apparel themselves gorgeously, and some of them far above their degrees, whether their husbands will or no. Some do it, say they, of a simplicity, some do it of a pride, and some of other causes. But they do it because they will be quarter-masters with their husbands. Quarter-masters? Nay, half-masters ; yea, some of them will be whole-masters, and rule the roast as they list themselves."

Although the years of Sarah's childhood were spent within the School Board era, she profited so little by its educational advantages that she was quite unable to follow the minister correctly in the few words of betrothal she had to speak. One of her numerous blunders was that she would "love, chirp, and obey."

Susannah saw nothing objectionable in saying,

“till death us no power.” The minister endeavoured to throw a little light into her mind by telling her that what she had said did not make sense.

A singularity of action, seldom seen in brides when engaged in giving their troth, was observable in Emma. Whilst her right hand was officially occupied in grasping the hand of her bridegroom, she did not allow her left hand to be idle, but made it pass through an unusual performance. At the beginning of the sentences she first rubbed her mouth, then caressed her chin, and next lodged her hand upon her waist, resting it upon its back. This process was repeated and continued until the termination of her troth-giving, when fresh occupation was found for the restless hand, the groom taking temporary possession of, and steadying it.

SECTION XXVII

INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH THE RING

“Accept this modest ring of virgin gold.
Love in the small, but perfect circle, trace,
And duty in its soft though strict embrace.
Plain, precious, pure, as best becomes the wife ;
Yet firm to bear the frequent rubs of life.
Connubial love disdains a fragile toy,
Which rust can tarnish or a touch destroy.”

THE next requirement of the service is that the bridegroom lay upon the minister's book, a ring as a preliminary to his presenting it to the bride. This presentation is an extremely old and significant rite, “probably derived from the ancient way of expressing esteem for any person. The ring was originally used for a signet or seal ; and the act of delivering a ring to another denoted that the receiver was con-

sidered by the giver as the confidant of his secrets, the partner in his councils, and sometimes the sharer of his property. The giving of a ring was likewise the ordinary rite, or pledge, of investing any one with honour or power. Thus when Pharaoh set Joseph over all the land of Egypt he took off the ring from his own hand and put it on Joseph's hand."

Blunt, in his "Key to the Prayer Book," says "The ring may be considered to mean two things: (1) That the wife is thus linked to her husband, and hence both to each other; and (2) that eternity, constancy, and integrity, true as gold, and unending as a ring, are the characteristics of the marriage bond."

In the sixteenth century wedding-rings were engraved on the inner side with a motto, such as, "My heart and I, until I die," "Not two but one, till life is done," "I will be yours while breath endures," "In thee, my choice, I do rejoice," "If you deny, then sure I die."

At marriages, the wedding ring has been to many a source of great perplexity. In various ways it has given trouble. Some of the parties

we have been officially connected with have gone to church without it. Some could not find it until after a prolonged search. Some grooms gaily produced and attempted to use it much too soon. Some have dropped it when about to use it. Some have had enormous difficulty in getting it to its appointed place upon the bride's finger; and some men have brought trouble upon themselves by acting the fool with it.

It has been quite a welcome deliverance to many bridegrooms when they have been freed from the responsibilities connected with the handling of the wedding-ring. Some, not well up in the marriage service, have expected it was the very first thing that had to be attended to. Many brides have misled them in this matter, and have bidden them to produce the ring some time before it was wanted, with the result that they have made many vain attempts to use it prematurely. Being in their hands when these have been required for other purposes, and not being able to hold it and the bride's hands as well, they have tried to slip it

on to one of their fingers to get rid of it ; and much bewilderment has ensued.

Some bridegrooms have been told to put the ring into their pockets as it was not then wanted. An evident sense of relief has not been confined to bridegroom and bride when the little troubler has safely reached its destination, all present, more or less, sharing in the feeling that a tiresome burden is removed from their minds.

Some of the men who were inclined to be frolicsome were foolish enough to trifle with their wedding-rings. They had, no doubt, been making merry over them at home, and had amused their friends by telling them what they would do with the magic circlet when in church. The smiles and suppressed laughter have doubtless arisen from the remembrance of what had previously passed. But even without any such incentive, by engaging in the service, they, instead of being calmly impressed, had become sufficiently excited to do some ridiculous things they had not contemplated, or become so nervous as not to be quite masters of their feelings and actions ; so that by the time the crowning

act of the service had to be performed they were prepared for almost any absurdity in word or deed, owing to the whole proceeding being so novel and strange to them.

The handling of the wedding-ring has given many overgrown boys reared in country villages an opportunity of showing what great babies they were. Of course it will be understood that no cultivated persons could act like those referred to in this chapter. It would be a cause for grave reflection were such to lose their heads so lamentably at such times and in such circumstances.

One of the unpleasant results of nervousness in bridegrooms has been seen in their letting their wedding-rings fall to the ground when about to present them. This has not only increased their mental disturbance, but has also affected their brides. Some of the latter, with minds tinged with superstition, have seen in the casualty an omen of bad luck, and have felt much distressed, and the anticipated pleasure of the reception of the ring has been considerably modified. Since wedding-rings of a more

bulky form have been in general use, such catastrophes have been less frequent. Men with hardy hands, accustomed to deal with heavy things, have been better able to handle these and feel them when between their strong, thick fingers. Although these heavy rings made deeper inroads upon their slender purses than the more delicate morsels of gold they could scarcely feel, used to do, they were rewarded for the additional outlay by having something they were able to use with a greater sense of security. There are, however, some men sufficiently rough who would prefer to have something that weighed several pounds to handle, rather than one of the heaviest wedding-rings.

The greatest degree of gravity that could be produced in bridegrooms of the lower orders, in connection with the wedding-ring, has been through not finding it at the instant it was asked for, or the sudden remembrance that it had been left at home. The interest of the whole party has at once been centred in the fact and much concern has been shown. The

bridegroom, knowing exactly where he left it, has then made an unexpected journey homewards at the double quick, or has hastily been driven back in his carriage, his return with "the tool of matrimony" being anxiously awaited by all in the church.

The scenes that onlookers could witness with quiet resignation, have been when bridegrooms have shown perplexed confidence, and have assured their brides that they know they put the ring in their pockets, but could not then find it.

The chief difficulty, however, that has been most generally felt has arisen from the extraordinary smallness of the ring the bride had selected, the tightness of the fit causing it to become quite a work of art to get it over the knuckle. Some of the agitated bridegrooms, not being artistic, have substituted strength to the manifest endangerment of the finger; some, with questionable wisdom, have adopted a screwing process; others have patiently pegged away, only at length to confess themselves beaten; some have given up with but little

effort ; some, after doing their best unsuccessfully, have yielded to despair, leaving the bride to complete the apparently hopeless task. A tableau worthy the pencil of a Tenniel has been produced when both minister and bridegroom have been actively engaged in trying to push the ring over the bride's knuckle, when the simple expedient of moistening the finger would have been sufficient.

Just a word to young ladies who are likely to become brides. Please try to remember, when you have the pleasure and the privilege of holding forth your left hand to receive upon its fourth finger a wedding-ring, that you ought not to present it to your bridegroom with the palm upward, as that position, convenient though it may be to yourself when putting on a ring, is very inconvenient to him and has not a correct appearance. When Susannah held out her hand in that manner, Robert requested her to "turn it round," before he attempted to place the ring upon it. The most awkward position in which one or two brides have presented their hands has been the perpendicular, with the thumb

uppermost, and the fingers close together. Had it been their desire to puzzle their grooms, or to receive the ring upon the thumb, or a wrong finger, they could not have adopted a plan more likely to ensure such a result. Three or four centuries earlier the bride would have been expected to hold out her hand palm uppermost, as young maidens then received a well-filled purse as dowry at their marriage as well as a ring.

(a) ARRIVING IN CHURCH WITHOUT THE RING.

One article only, small and indispensable, termed by Butler in his "Hudibras" "the tool of matrimony—a ring," has to be produced by bridegrooms when engaged in the marriage service; and this has proved to be one too many for some thoughtless young men to remember. There have been a few so careless as to leave their homes and enter the church without allowing it once to disturb their thoughts. Their brides must either have placed mistaken confidence in them or have been as heedless as their grooms in the matter, or they would never

have accompanied their grooms to church without once popping the interesting question, "Has my dearest got the ring?"

Inability to produce the ring with promptitude when requested to lay it upon the minister's book produced no perturbation in George. He evidently didn't know when he ought to feel excited. It was almost provoking to see the stoical coolness with which he searched all his pockets again and again. To be phlegmatic at such a time, and under such conditions, was very unbecoming in a young man, and we were led to wonder what the event could be that would quicken him into activity, and the only thing we could suggest was his sitting down upon the business end of a tintack. The progress of the service was checked, the clergyman stood waiting, the bride was getting increasingly anxious, yet there was George, cool as a cucumber, calmly fumbling in his pockets for the wedding-ring. When the pause became prolonged, of course the bride felt the degree of excitement that was due to such an unexpected *contretemps*, and she tried in vain to waken his

sensibilities. She said to him, 'I gave it to you just before we came in. I hope you haven't lost it—you are rather careless.' Neither the anxious words nor the anxious looks of his dear Phœbe produced any visible responsive emotion. He continued the search with the calmness and doggedness of a Wellington at Waterloo, until he brought it to a successful termination.

(b) IN DOUBT RESPECTING THE RING.

Some bridegrooms in their perplexity *knew* they had not left the wedding-ring at home, but were in a state of uncertainty as to which pocket they had put it into, the doubt oftentimes involving a protracted search amid the "all and sundry" their numerous pockets contained.

An amusing little episode in connection with the ring occurred at Susannah's marriage. The bridegroom commenced searching for it immediately the clergyman requested him to produce it. Sometimes one of his hands and sometimes both were deeply hidden in the recesses of his trouser pockets, but no ring was

forthcoming. A purse was produced and carefully examined. Then a second purse was brought forth and its contents scrutinised, but in vain. The bride's assurance, "I put it in there myself," only increased the bridegroom's perplexity. Again the purse underwent a close examination, but the small glittering circle was not there. The bride was then fully aroused, and became interestingly active. Without apology, or hesitation, she plunged her hand down into the very depths of the man's left-hand trouser pocket, and made so thorough and determined a search, that no ring, however small, could possibly have evaded her. The bridegroom meanwhile was as resolutely operating within the precincts of the right-hand pocket. With such a persevering couple at work in such a spirit there was but little likelihood of the vagrant remaining long undiscovered. It was found, not in the purse, but "at large," and was apprehended in one of John's coat pockets.

Joseph was quick in his movements in searching for the ring, and although it eluded

his grasp longer than he wished or expected, causing both minister and bride to be kept waiting, he was so vigilant that he was not very long in discovering the secluded position it had gained. On receiving it back from the clergyman, he could not find it in his heart to wed his bride without giving her an affectionate kiss as a recompense for the slight tremor he had caused.

As William, after a very lengthy search, failed to find the wedding-ring he was satisfied he had brought with him from home, and as further waiting seemed likely to be in vain, the clergyman, to provide a way out of the difficulty, withdrew from his own finger the valuable ring he was wearing, and allowed the bridegroom to wed his bride with that.

Louisa was a bride who justly felt indignant in witnessing, and was unable to excuse, lethargic movements in her bridegroom when all things with him—looks, words, and actions—should have been exhibited in their highest perfection. Instead of attaining this ideal, William was extremely dense and dull. His

solemnity of look and action was more befitting a burial than a marriage. When the ring was needed, he, instead of ready compliance, was so dilatory that he gave the impression he didn't care whether he presented it or not. Observing this, his bride promptly took the matter into her own hands. Knowing exactly where the ring was, she dived her hand into a trouser pocket, brought it forth, and presented it to the minister. Could she have completed the ceremonial in connection with the ring, there is no doubt she would have acted independently, without troubling her sluggish bridegroom at all.

Ellen's bridegroom was cautious, and allowed his cautiousness to verge on dilatoriness. Unable to admire his extremely careful procedure when unwrapping the ring from its paper covering, the bride began to show signs of disapproval, and at last she peremptorily commanded him to "*make haste!*" In this she was unwise. Had he obeyed her injunction, become flurried, and dropped the ring, she would have thought him careless, and con-

sidered it an omen of ill-luck. He was showing the solicitude she ought to have appreciated; his fingers were thick, and the package small, requiring all his care to keep possession of it. Had he been handling a large and weighty parcel, he could and would have shown greater capabilities.

But we have wandered, and must return to those who were in doubt respecting the whereabouts of the ring. When the clergyman asked Samuel for the ring, the latter looked at the bride, and said to her, "You've got the ring, ain't ye?" "No, you've got it," she replied. This fact Samuel doubted. To convince him, he was instantly told, "You put it in your purse." He brought forth his purse, and though incredulous as to its containing the morsel of gold that was wanted, he peered into it, then put in a finger that nearly filled it, and agitated the few coins it contained, at the same time stating his belief—not in a whisper—that he had either left the ring at home or had lost it. In spite of this, he continued to fumble the money, pushing it

about, and then slowly taking it out piece by piece. As these dilatory proceedings were taking place in the midst of the service, he was advised to expedite matters by allowing the bride to make an examination, as her younger eyes and keener fingers would doubtless soon arrest the little treasure if it were there. Samuel showed decided reluctance to do this before he had quite emptied the purse of its contents. When he had cleared it, he passed it to the bride, who, on examining its emptiness, remarked sadly, "It ain't here; 'ave you lost it?" The bridegroom didn't know, or pretended he didn't. Again he turned the silver coins in his hand, and at last discovered that the ring was really there, and so the perplexity ended. They were not young beginners, both had been married before, and Samuel could acknowledge that seventy-five years had passed since his entry into the world was announced. When in the vestry the following comment was made upon the little hitch that had occurred: "Had it been a big iron hoop you would have had no difficulty with it." "No," he replied,

“or if it had been a plough’s tail I could have taken care of it.”

(c) CONVEYING WEDDING-RINGS TO CHURCH.

To a large number of persons belonging to the working classes the safe custody of the wedding-ring, from the time of its purchase until the clergyman bids the bridegroom place it upon the bride’s finger, has been a matter of great concern. This in no wise diminishes as the time of marriage draws nigh. Then the great question has to be decided as to the best method of ensuring its safety in its passage from home to church.

Unless absolutely necessary for the safety of the ring, the bride should not be the bearer of it when leaving home; the man is as much its proper custodian before as the woman is its rightful possessor after marriage. It having to be presented officially by the bridegroom to the bride, he should have it in his possession till then. When the bride, doubting his ability to convey the little hoop of gold safely to church, hesitates to place it under his care and retains

it, she ought to entrust it to his keeping immediately upon entering the sacred edifice. It is very unseemly for the bridegroom to have to ask and obtain it from her who is to be its recipient, whilst the minister is waiting to receive it from him. James was placed in this undignified position. When the clergyman asked for the ring, he, instead of presenting it, turned to the bride and inquired, "Have you got the ring?" Yes, she had it, and at once took it from her pocket.

We can readily excuse the anxiety and admire the carefulness many poor brides have shown in connection with their highly valued wedding-rings, and have often been convinced that it was wisest and best for them to have the charge and safe keeping of them prior to the beginning of the service. But the method adopted by Ada and one or two other brides in taking their rings to church was about the worst possible and the most likely to raise suspicions of an unfavourable character. They came wearing the ring upon the fourth finger of the left hand, and allowed it to remain there

until the minister had requested its presentation.

John was another of the many bridegrooms who were not entrusted with the ring. When he was expected to present it, instead of doing so he looked at the "daddy," and complacently said to the clergyman, "He's got it."

Neither James nor his bride, although their united ages amounted to sixty years, was allowed to take charge of the ring. The minister asked for the ring. The bride turned to the bridesmaid and said, "Mother! the ring." The mother, instead of passing it to the waiting groom, laid it on the clergyman's book, and James instantly tried to grasp it, as if it were the first chance he had had of doing so.

The mode of conveyance adopted by Charles has had, and is likely to have, but few imitators. His idea of security was to have the ring in his mouth; his matrimonial utterances being much affected thereby.

(d) OFFERING THE RING PREMATURELY.

Some of our uncultivated bridegrooms have been greatly exercised about the ring all the time it has been in their possession, from the commencement of the service until it has reached the bride's finger. Ignorantly imagining every moment that it would be wanted, they have had it in their hands, and have offered it at every possible opportunity. They were ready to give it to the bride or the minister, they cared not which, so long as they were rid of it. The only definite notion that some of them had of the service was, they knew they had to give the bride a ring, so they had it to the front all the time, from the opening words of the service. The persistency of their offers, and their attempts to place it on any one of the bride's fingers, have been something to witness. It has been in their right hands when the hands were wanted to take the bride, and instead of grasping her hand they have tried to place the ring on one of its fingers. When hands were loosed for a re-grasp, the irrepressible ring has

again been introduced. It has been quite a relief when the bridegroom and his ring ceased to trouble.

This welcome sense of relief was felt when the ring had safely reached Sarah's finger. From the moment the minister approached her and the bridegroom until he instructed the latter to say, "With this ring," &c., Richard, with his ring, was little short of a nuisance. He was incessantly bothering with it, and bringing it forward every fresh movement that was made, either offering it or trying to get it on a finger, and causing it to complicate the operations of his own hands. He seemed to imagine it was the Alpha and Omega of the service. He had been married before, was half a century old, and therefore ought to have known better. Experience is sadly lost upon some persons: they fail to profit by it.

Stephen was another bridegroom whose mind centred in the ring, and it caused him to give a deal of annoyance in the earlier part of the service. All his thoughts and attention ap-

peared to be concentrated in the little golden circlet. To him there was nothing incongruous in offering it three or four times before the part of the service requiring its introduction had been reached. Then, when the right moment came for him to present it, he ignorantly inquired whether *he* was to put it on.

Though more juvenile than the above couple, George and his bride had both enjoyed matrimonial experience. But as an aid to the better understanding of the marriage formalities, this was lost upon them. In the ring the bride's thoughts were absorbed, and probably there was something excusable in that, as we shall presently see. The instant the opening address that is given to the whole assembly was ended she gave George a command to produce it. Again, as soon as she had said, "I will," she asked him for the ring; and again he offered it, only to have it declined by the clergyman. When the time for its presentation had duly arrived, another difficulty in connection with it immediately sprang up. It seemed extremely doubtful whether the ring could be placed upon the

customary finger. George, when trying to place it, affirmed that it was "too small," and all but the bride were ready to agree with him. She maintained that it was large enough, and said, "It's only my knuckle dislocated. It's all right after it gets over the knuckle." Exactly. But the great difficulty was to get it over. Encouraged by her assurance that it was big enough, and the determination not to be beaten if possible, George perseveringly tried all means to get it on, pushing, pecking, and tugging at it with a vigour that suggested further dislocation, until welcome relief came by its being compelled to yield, after a stubborn resistance.

Another bridegroom of the same Christian name was one of the ring troublers. In this instance the clergyman, using prompt measures to bring the annoyance to a speedy end, took the ring out of his hand and placed it in an outer pocket of the man's coat. As the proverb says, "They who hide can find," so the reverend gentleman, knowing its resting-place, without asking Charles to produce it when it was

required, put his own hand into the groom's pocket, extracted from it the little treasure, and then gave it him to use in the appointed way.

(e) PRESENTING THE RING TO THE MINISTER.

When the bridegroom, at the minister's request, produces the marriage-ring, he, before he makes use of it by giving it to the bride, is required to lay it upon the ministerial book, intimating by so doing that it is his duty to offer it first to God—the clergyman being His representative on the occasion—before making use of it himself, and then receive it back from His hand to employ it to His glory.

The significant formality, though of easy performance, has been undertaken in various ways. Uncultivated individuals have not only failed to understand its meaning, but also the right way of doing it. In some, ignorance and impudence have combined. In others, a lack of ordinary politeness has been shown. The true signification of the presentation has been lost sight of in some instances through the

ignorant officiousness of the "daddy" or the bridesmaid.

A gold wedding-ring is a choice possession, and is one that a working man has a right, after its having relieved him of much hard-earned cash, to hold in high estimation. No one could complain of this. William's mistake lay in the ostentatious display he made with it. He tried to win for it the admiration of the whole assembly. On producing it from his pocket in response to the ministerial request he, before placing it on the clergyman's book, foolishly exhibited it at arm's length, saying, "Here's a clipper!"

When asking Charles for the ring, the minister touched his book with the tip of one of his fingers, to indicate to him that he was to place it there. Instead of receiving guidance from the sign he mistook its purport and placed the tip of his own finger upon the book. What could any sane person imagine would be the utility of such an action? Nervousness prevented Charles from being in his usual form; he was so out of order he would have placed

the tip of his nose there unhesitatingly, had he been asked.

Frederick's mental condition at the time of his marriage was on an equality with that of Charles. The clergyman, when he required the ring in order to enable Frederick to understand that he was to place it upon the book, signified this to him, by placing his hand upon his book. Frederick then childishly placed his hand in like manner upon the same book. He then received plain, verbal instructions that he could not fail to understand.

George's mind at the time of his marriage, instead of being calm and peaceful as nature on a bright summer's day, was as flurried as nature is when a gale of wind is blowing. Even at times, when not engaged in specialities of a disturbing nature, his intellectual capacity was not remarkable for keen discernment. At his marriage his mental stability, such as it was, became in quite a tilted condition, so that when the minister said to him, "Put the ring on and hold it," we must not be too hard upon George because he repeated (as carefully as when he

was troth-plighting) the words after the minister, "Put the ring on and hold it."

(f) DROPPING THE RING ACCIDENTALLY.

When a wedding-ring falls to the ground whilst the service is in progress it is considered by many persons to be ominous of ill-luck. Such being the impression, great care is usually taken to prevent such an undesirable casualty from happening. One of the bridegrooms, in his anxiety to keep the ring secure until it was wanted, wetted his thumb at his mouth (as many simpletons do their fingers when turning the leaves of books), placed the ring upon it as far as he could get it down, and kept it there until he had to present it.

Had it been William's desire to disturb the mind of her whom he called in the service "My weddy wife," he could not have adopted a much more effectual plan than by putting the wedding-ring, unwrapped, with his handkerchief in one pocket. This was the way to court disaster. Had it been a pound weight, or an iron quoit, instead of the little dainty circle of gold, the

handkerchief would not have been so disturbing to it, and William could have withdrawn one without the other. As it was, the ring became lost as in a maze in the handkerchief so that he could not feel or find when he wanted it. When he withdrew the handkerchief the ring sprang from its hiding-place and made its way to the ground.

Thomas was a fumble-fingered bridegroom, quite unfit for the handling of goldsmiths' delicacies. A ring from a blacksmith's forge would have better suited his capacities. The "little tool of matrimony" afforded him a fine opportunity for displaying his awkwardness. His bride, being fully aware of his capabilities, kept the ring in her own possession until it was officially demanded. She then passed to her rejoicing groom the purse that not only contained the golden ring, but the silver coins that would be required for the marriage fees. He instantly gave an illustration of his abilities. As soon as he opened the purse he allowed both the wedding-ring and half a crown to go forth on a racing expedition on the floor of the

church, to the manifest annoyance of the bride, and to the disturbance of the proceedings.

(g) DIFFICULTY WITH ENGAGEMENT-RINGS.

A few brides have unwisely presented themselves in church wearing their engagement-ring upon the fourth finger of their left hand, and have even allowed it to remain there until the moment has arrived when the wedding-ring has been waiting its reception. Any advantage gained by thus retaining the former in that position one altogether fails to see. In our ignorance we imagined that the purpose served by the wearing an engagement-ring, as such, had ended on the morning of the day the happy wearer expected to change her name and her condition. In our simplicity we have been wont to believe that if the finger of these favoured ladies had been divested of the significant emblem they would have run but little risk at such a time of having to endure the embarrassment of an additional and unexpected offer of marriage.

The engagement-ring and its wearer both

change their appellations at the same time. When a young lady is raised to the dignity of a wife her engagement-ring henceforth becomes a "keeper." Up to that auspicious event, the ring protects its fair wearer against superfluous offers of marriage ; henceforth it maintains watch and guard over her wedding-ring. To accomplish this effectively it must necessarily be above the latter ring upon the finger.

Had further illustration been needed to show the folly of allowing the engagement-ring to remain upon the finger until the time of marriage Jane would have supplied it. She gave all present a practical proof of the inconvenience arising from negligence in that particular. When she ought to have been as ready as she was willing to receive, in peace and composure, the "token and pledge" of her union with her bridegroom she commenced a series of unpleasant haulings, excitable peckings, and an unpleasant amount of pulling to persuade an unsympathetic ring to leave her finger. Its perversity appeared to increase in the ratio of the force brought to bear upon it. As it com-

pletely defied Jane's determined attacks the groom tried his "'prentice hand" with a resolve and an effort that he thought would ensure respect. But he succeeded no better than the bride: the ring was still defiant, and declined to budge. In a "do or die" manner, Jane then concentrated her energies upon it so persistently and effectively that it at last yielded and ceased any longer to obstruct.

Peculiar notions respecting her engagement-ring appeared to be entertained by Bessie. She not only allowed it to remain upon her finger, but declined to make any attempt to remove it, even when her groom was ready with the significant band of gold. She saw that he had received it back from the minister and was waiting to wed her with it: but instead of taking off the seal of engagement she had the unconscionable impudence to say to the bridegroom, in a peremptory tone, "Take that one off." It was an absurd request, as her right hand was disengaged and his was occupied in holding the wedding-ring in readiness to present it. The clergyman

seeing this, instead of requiring her to act reasonably, and bidding her to remove the obstruction, actively engaged himself in the matter and "took it off." If it were Bessie's determination that her groom should "take it off"—as he probably had placed it there—the reverend gentleman unwittingly prevented her little fad from being gratified. Home would have been the proper place for its realisation.

(h) MISPLACING THE WEDDING RING.

In answer to the question, "Why is it that the person to be married is enjoined to put a ring upon the fourth finger of his spouse's left hand?" Hone's "Year Book" gives the following reply: "There is nothing more in this than the custom was handed down to the present age from the practice of our ancestors, who found the left hand more convenient for such ornaments than the right because it is less employed." For the same reason they chose the fourth finger, which is not only less used than either of the rest, but it is more capable of preserving a ring from bruises, having this

one peculiar quality, that it cannot be extended but in company with the other fingers, whilst the rest may be singly stretched to their full length and straightness.

So thoroughly nervous have some couples become whilst engaged in the marriage service that they have appeared unable for a time to distinguish the right hand from the left and the result has been in a great many instances that the right hand instead of the left has been the first to accept the marriage adornment. On one occasion four marriages were being solemnised, and it was a curious fact that two of the brides held out the right hand and received in the first instance the ring upon the fourth finger of that hand.

Were we inclined to apologise for George's blundering in this matter, we might suggest that probably he was left-handed, and so had a tendency to mistake the right hand for the left. His activity with the ring upon his bride's right hand was suddenly interrupted by her taking it off, restoring it to him, withdrawing her right hand, and presenting her left.

When there are two ways of doing things—a right way and a wrong—the latter usually suggests itself first. This was seen when Harry wedded his bride. He had to place the ring upon her left hand, and he, with much earnestness, succeeded in getting it down the corresponding finger of her other hand. Having so done they both awoke to the consciousness of the blunder, and its rectification added neither grace nor dignity to the service.

Life's meridian had passed both with Robert and his bride when they became "man and wife together." It was therefore not astonishing to find that the former was not an adept in the technicalities of this particular service. All he cared about was the broad fact that he wished to be married to the lady of his choice. So when asked whether he would have Amelia to his wedded wife, a cheery "Oh, yes," was immediately given in response. When plighting his "troan" to her, he promised he would "live and cherish till death do part." Having made these important attestations he was ready to receive some back from Amelia. But finding

her not so promptly responsive as he had been, he said to her, "You got to repeat that." Amelia having repeated all that was required of her, his attention was next drawn towards the ring. With youthful indifference to the ministerial direction he quietly and cheerfully placed it on the fourth finger of the bride's right hand. Observing the mistake he was making, the clergyman said to him, "The other hand," and Robert at once applied his other hand to the manipulation. Then waking up to the fact that it was not his other hand, but the bride's that was wanted, he with a coolness and a gravity that heroes are made of, said to her, "You've got it on the wrong hand, my dear gal."

(i) TRIFLING WITH THE RING.

A man at his marriage has a right to rejoice and be glad, but he has no right to act the fool. Marriage should be, and is, when all is well, one of the most joyous periods in a man's life. But it is also a time fraught with momentous consequences that are, or ought to be, sufficient to make a sensible man thoughtful

and keep his joy within proper bounds. It is a time when there is every reason why he should rise to his highest and prove himself worthy of the new position he has by marriage undertaken to fill. This of course goes without saying, and is fully understood by men of sense : but not all men who get married are men of sense. Some being fools, we have seen foolery indulged in by a few even amid the impressive declarations of the marriage service. Some weak-minded men have imagined that it was a time when a little licence should be allowed, and they have taken the opportunity, not of exhibiting themselves to the best advantage, but of showing how foolishly they could act and how intellectually small they were.

Robert thought it the correct thing to be in doubt as to which was the bride's ring finger. So before presenting it he pretended to think it necessary to inquire which finger he was to put the ring upon. James did the same. On receiving the direction from the minister to "put it on the third finger of the left hand," he asked, "Which is the third finger of the left

hand?" To raise this question was perhaps legitimate, as in the Rubric the ring finger is called the fourth. Another trifler, who was only a quarter of a century old, on being instructed to place the ring upon the fourth finger of Mary Ann's left hand, commenced a deliberate counting of her fingers, beginning with the smallest and making the index finger the fourth, then he foolishly placed the ring thereon. He was again told to put it on her fourth finger. After withdrawing the ring, he had the effrontery to recount the bride's fingers, commencing with the one he had placed the ring upon, and so making the little finger her fourth, and then placing the ring upon that. It happened, fortunately for him, that the clergyman who was engaged in the service was not one of our sternest. Had it been otherwise he would not have escaped the reprimand his absurdity so richly deserved.

William was another groom who was so happy over his marriage that he thought it quite right to be silly. Like many others, he made the wedding-ring instrumental in aiding

him in his folly. On its being returned to him he pretended to believe that the little finger of the bride's hand was to be its destination. Before placing the ring upon that finger he pointed to it, and asked, "Am I to put it on this 'ere one?"

(k) TIGHT-FITTING WEDDING-RINGS.

It is quite necessary that a ring intended to be always worn upon the finger should be one that fits closely and well, so as not easily to be removed or disturbed. Brides, as a rule, have clearly understood this, and a large number, probably a majority of them, have selected rings that have fitted with marvellous accuracy. Many have made the size of the ring a study, and the fit has been so precise that it has been a work requiring skill to get them into their appointed places, care, tact, patience, and perseverance being necessary to accomplish it. In these desirable gifts and graces, many bridegrooms have been sadly deficient; consequently, they have found themselves in perplexity and difficulty instead

of serenity when the management of these rings has been placed in their hands. Even bridegrooms endowed with the necessary qualifications have not all been able calmly to exercise them at the supreme moment; some have barely succeeded in the task. Others, who had been altogether unaccustomed to the handling of small gold rings, have found in the manipulation of the wedding-ring the crowning difficulty of the marriage service. From the extreme smallness of some of the bands of gold and the inexperience, awkwardness, and nervousness of many of the bridegrooms, many interesting tableaux have arisen, to the great amusement of the interested spectators.

The task that Eliza had prepared for her groom at their marriage was a difficult one. She had selected a ring so diminutive that it required both tact and patience to persuade and enable it to reach its destined place. For some time it absolutely refused to go further than the knuckle, and H.'s mind began to be filled with doubt as to the result. As his exer-

tions seemed fruitless, he said earnestly to the bride, "You've got it too small," and it really appeared to be so. She then saw it was necessary to do something to help him, so with her mouth she moistened the obstructive joint. The groom then renewed his efforts, and after a deal of applied pressure, first on this side, then on that, he saw indications of yielding. Then, in a brighter tone, he said, "Now he slips!" and the victory was gained.

We remember an occasion when the ring used was so ridiculously small, the bride was compelled to remove it from her finger before leaving the church, being unable to bear its pressure.

William was not only a believer in the effectiveness of moistening the finger to secure an easy passage of a small ring, but he acted on his belief in a practical manner in connection with his token and pledge. Relying not on half measures, he both wetted his bride's finger at his own lips, and deposited the ring itself into his mouth, before he essayed to

place it in its rightful position. This twofold application proved very effective.

Mary Ann was a wise and thoughtful bride, and did what she could to prevent the difficulty that she expected would probably beset her young man when engaged in the act of wedding her. Instead of waiting, as many have done, until their grooms were getting despondent, she prepared her finger for the reception of the ring whilst her bridegroom was preparing to present it, thus preventing the trouble and embarrassment that she knew was likely to arise.

How extremely arduous Elijah found the placing a ring upon his bride's finger to be, could be seen from the attitude he assumed when doing it. He placed his feet wide apart, and bent his head and shoulders down so low, that at a short distance he had the appearance of being engaged in butting.

What kind of difficulty will a man not be ready to shirk who cowers before the little, and rightly viewed, pleasant obstacle he meets with when placing a tight-fitting wedding-ring upon

his bride's finger? What is the stamina of an Englishman worth who contentedly leaves the ring lodging insecurely on the woman's knuckle, instead of endeavouring to become master of the art required? This kind of person is, however, anything but a rarity. Such an one was A. He would have shirked his duty had not his bride prevented him. She had no notion of his leaving her wedding-ring in a ridiculous position upon her finger. If he wished to present it he must do it in a becoming manner; so she declined to withdraw her hand until she had unhesitatingly told him to "put it right," and he had considered it advisable to do so.

The efforts that John put forth to get the ring quite down the finger of his bride were very feeble and utterly inadequate, and failed to give the lady satisfaction. Observing his negligent inclination, she promptly infused fresh vigour into him by saying, "Go on! put it on!" No knuckle-perching for her; to its destination he must make it go. Her energetic spur proved effective.

(I) ACTIVITY OF BRIDES.

We have already had indications of the fact that many active and energetic young ladies have found it extremely difficult to remain as passive as they ought to have been while the part of the marriage service that pertains especially to the man was being performed. By the time the minister has been prepared to receive the ring from the bridegroom, the bride in some instances has so warmed to the ceremony, has so thoroughly engaged in it, and has become nervously excited by it, that she could do anything better than remain calm and collected and keep her tongue completely under control. Some, on reaching the culminating point of the service, have, in their effervescence, momentarily lost sight of and forgotten their true position, and have invaded the province of the groom. Probably in this unconscious manner they have foreshadowed the relative positions the two would occupy in the economy of their future homes.

Great eagerness was shown by Martha to

obtain full possession of the ring. On the bridegroom receiving it from the minister, the bride, as if correcting a mistake, instantly took it out of his hand, and without the slightest questioning or hesitation, placed it upon her ring finger. Although a widow, and able to handle with adroitness a wedding-ring, she ought patiently to have awaited its due reception, though awkward and inexperienced hands might deliver it. Possibly from being accustomed in daily life to do everything for herself, she, in her nervous excitement, acted mechanically. But from whatever source the cause may have sprung, she, by so doing, marred the perfection of a significant act required on the part of the bridegroom.

A wistful expression was on Hannah's countenance whilst her groom was actively engaged in guiding the ring to its appointed place. She had a glowing desire to take part in this act, so she told him "not to put it all the way down." As she had to take part in other portions of the service, so she would like to have a share in that particular also.

Eliza was somewhat exercised in her mind as to the correct procedure to be taken with the ring in its passage down her finger—whether the groom's exertions were to be unremittent until it had reached its final resting-place, or whether he was expected to pause midway, make his pronouncement respecting it, and then resume his efforts. Being the individual most interested in the point, she could not leave it to the groom to ascertain the method of performing his duty, so she inquired of the clergyman the course he was to take, and found that nothing fantastical was expected; he must first place the ring in its right position upon her finger, and then declare his object in doing it.

Without exhibiting the unbecoming haste of taking the ring from the bridegroom's hand and placing it upon her own finger, Jane discreetly allowed it to reach her finger from his hand; but that was all her eager spirit permitted him to do. The instant the ring was within her reach, she took active charge of it, and personally conducted it along her

finger, her groom, to all appearance, being nothing loth to be rid of the responsibility and to leave the management of it to her. Was not this an inauguration with a fault on both sides?

(*m*) WITHDRAWING THE WEDDING-RING.

Amongst the curious incidents connected with the wedding-ring must be mentioned the removing it from the bride's finger. This peculiarity has occurred on several occasions. Bridegrooms and brides have been sufficiently nervous to enable them mechanically to take the ring from instead of allowing it to remain in its appointed place. No definite object was in view in this. Had the reason been asked no satisfactory answer could have been given. It was simply a result of the topsy-turvy condition their minds were then in. Being in a perturbed state they were ready for the performance of unmeaning actions.

When James had placed the little "token and pledge" halfway down his bride's finger he conscientiously left it there, nothing doubting

but that the bride would give it its final adjustment. But instead of pressing it down her finger as was expected, she surprised the whole party by doing the very opposite. She actually removed it, and gave it back to James. It was an extraordinary proceeding, and seemed quite unaccountable. Had she been a coy and blushing maiden in her teens, with her light and trifling mind unbalanced by excitement, we could have better understood it, than we were on seeing it done by a widow-bride, in the forty-ninth year of her age. She was asked to give the reason, and the only one at her command was, "I forgot."

The removal of the ring, after it had been but partially placed upon her finger by her bridegroom, was in nowise acceptable to, or coincided with the expectations of, Sarah. When its presentation had been partially accomplished, she of course wished and waited for its completion. Her groom, by acting otherwise in a moment of abstraction, was tantalising. After passing the ring a little way down, he paused, and then gave it an

upward movement until it had quite left the finger. This vacillating proceeding being indulged in without apparent necessity, was unsatisfactory, and so disturbed Sarah that she instantly awoke him to a higher appreciation and recognition of his duty. Nothing of a vacillating character would suit her, or could be tolerated from him at that moment ; so she, with decisive vigour, said to him, " Go on ! put it on ! 'With this ring'—go on ! " The reader may feel certain that, after such a spirited spur, both the bridegroom and the ring went on.

On receiving the ring back from the minister, George immediately placed it, as expected, upon his bride's finger. But when the reverend gentleman bade him hold the ring, and repeat after him, he, instead of holding it upon the finger of his beloved, took it off and held it forth between his finger and thumb, whilst he followed the clergyman through the whole formula of words ; after which he returned it.

Had the wedding-ring been glowing with fervent heat, James could not have shown much greater activity in handling it than he

did in the service. He hastily laid it upon the clergyman's book ; and on receiving it back, as hastily perched it on the bride's finger, and left it lodging near the end, as if afraid any longer to retain his hold. If James imagined he would be allowed to slur his duty in this off-hand manner, he soon found himself mistaken. On observing his imperfect performance of duty, the minister said to him, " Will you hold the ring and say after me ? " The bride hearing this, and supposing James had been too hasty, and had not held the ring long enough between his finger and thumb, but had been too quick in placing it in her possession, took it from her finger and returned it to him, so that he might hold it a little longer and make a more deliberate presentation.

(n) ADDITIONAL RINGS.

Ladies of discernment when entering married life have the good taste to allow the left hand to be adorned with the wedding-ring at the time of marriage, waiting until home has been reached before they allow any other ring

to be placed upon that hand. When we pass from them to others much lower down in life's social scale, we find that different ideas and tastes prevail. All the rings in their possession must be taken to church and fingers made resplendent with the encumbrances.

Instead of reverently engaging in the service by joining in the prayers, and giving her best attention to the good counsel and advice given by the minister at the close, Ann, a young woman twenty years of age, occupied her thoughts and allowed her attention to centre upon some rings she had brought to church, and busied herself in arranging them above her wedding-ring. By the time the service ended, her marriage token was overshadowed by a number of self-asserting rings that reached to the finger joint. Though immensely captivating in her eyes, we failed to appreciate the ostentatious display.

At Sarah's second marriage she was six-and-thirty. Both her age and circumstances ought to have been helpful to her in forming a right judgment. But in this she was sadly

lacking. Whilst standing at the communion rails ostensibly engaged in the service, she was really occupied in placing six other rings upon her left hand. These so asserted themselves that the simple wedding-ring was overshadowed and eclipsed.

Whilst the clergyman was engaged in marrying a second couple, Richard amused himself by presenting to his bride, and placing upon her finger, the keeper-ring he had purchased for her. Attention was drawn to these proceedings, as, on his taking it from his pocket, he allowed it to fall from his hand, and it made a tinkling as it capered upon the stone floor. This, though unwelcome, was not deemed so ominous as the fall of the wedding-ring.

Henry was a bridegroom who did not wish to be fettered by ordinary requirements, but preferred that it should be seen and known by all present what he could do. A plain hoop of gold might satisfy some people, but it was not sufficient for him to present to the minister; as he was the possessor of a second ring he

would present that as well, so he laid the broad gold keeper-ring upon the book, with the wedding-ring. The additional one, was of course, not accepted, and Henry replaced it in his pocket, probably satisfied that the incident had fully served his purpose.

But few women experience the unusually strange pleasure of receiving two wedding-rings on one morning. This peculiar gratification, however, was granted to Ellen. Both were presented to her in church: one in the service, the second in the vestry. Both rings were purchased for the same marriage, and it came about in this way. A gentleman who felt interested in their marriage, promised a short time before the day fixed for its solemnisation that he would present them with a wedding-ring. As the time for the marriage drew nigh, and the promise appeared to have been forgotten, they placed no further reliance upon it, and purchased one for themselves. This one they brought with them, and the bride was wedded with it. When the service was completed, and the registers were being

signed, to their surprise a messenger arrived from their friend with the ring he had promised. It was accepted, and in this way Ellen received two wedding-rings at her marriage with William.

SECTION XXVIII

THE BRIDEGROOM'S DECLARATION WITH THE RING

“The ring is on :
The ‘wilt thou?’ answered, and again
The ‘wilt thou?’ ask’d ; till out of twain
The sweet ‘I will’ has made ye one.”

TENNYSON.

THE bridegroom having placed the wedding-ring upon the prescribed finger of the bride, he is required to retain his hold of it, while he repeats after the clergyman the following declaration : “With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow : In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” Respecting this formula, Wheatley remarks : “That the man holding the

ring, being taught by the Priest, and speaking to his wife, he assures her, that this is a visible pledge that he now takes her to his Wedded Wife. *With this Ring, I thee wed*, or make a Covenant with thee (for so the word signifies) that all the rights and privileges of a lawful Wife do from this instant belong to thee. After these words in the first Prayer Book of King Edward VI. followed, *This Gold and Silver I thee give*; at the repeating of which words it was the custom to give the Woman a Purse of Money. But this was left out of the second Book, probably because it was more than some people could perform. Besides, by what has been said, it appears that the design of it is fully enough answered by the delivery of the Ring. The Man therefore having wedded her with the Ring, in the next words proceeds to assign over the Rights accruing to her thereby. The first of these is *Honour*, and therefore he immediately adds, *With my Body I thee worship*, i.e., with my Body I thee *honour*; for so the word signifies in this place. The design of it is to express that the Woman, by virtue of this

Marriage, has a share in all the Titles and Honours which are due or belong to the Person of her Husband. It is true the modern sense of the word is somewhat different; for which reason I find that at the Review of our Liturgy, after the Restoration of King Charles II., *Worship* was promised to be changed for *Honour*. How the alteration came to be omitted, I can't discover. But so long as the old word is explained in the sense that I have given of it, one would think no objection could be urg'd against the using it.

“ The second right accruing to the Wife by virtue of her Marriage is *Maintenance*; and therefore the husband adds, in the next place, *With all my Worldly Goods I thee endow*. And the design of the words is not so much to *invest* the Woman with a right to all her Husband's Goods, as to *declare* that by Marriage she has acquired such right. For from the very instant of their making the mutual Stipulation, the Woman has a right to sue for a Maintenance during the life of her Husband.”

The last words are a solemn confirmation of the engagement, being an invocation of the sacred Trinity as witness to this compact.

Well would it be were all who engage in this deeply important ceremony calmly and seriously to contemplate beforehand its momentous consequences and the far-reaching responsibilities it entails upon them. Then would less ignorance and levity be shown by many during the moments they are engaged in its solemnities.

When John had carefully placed the ring on his bride's finger, the clergyman said to him, "Hold it there with the right hand." John then with great precision, repeated after him, "Hold it there with the right hand," just as he had recited his troth-plighting words.

It was not merely surprising but disgraceful to find a man who was born in the year the Education Act came into force, so profoundly stupid that at his marriage, when in the twenty-seventh year of his age, he should be unable to distinguish between the ministerial guidance that was given him in connection with the ring, and the words of the marriage service. Such,

however, was the case with S. When directing his movements at that part of the ceremony, the clergyman said, "As you hold it there say these words." He then, parrot like, deliberately repeated the words, "As you hold it there," causing subdued excitement amongst the listeners in the well-filled pews.

Walter had reached the conceited age of eighteen, and considered himself a man fit for marriage with a girl of seventeen. When the minister instructed him to hold the ring upon the bride's finger and say the appointed words after him, he, instead of receiving the instructions in respectful silence, made known his self-importance with an impudent "All right."

It was Richard's intention to show due respect to the minister, but his manner of expressing it was faulty, unfortunately leading him to say one thing while he distinctly meant another. When engaged in the final act that united him in wedlock to his bride, he said, "With this ring I thee wed, sir ; with my body I thee worship, sir."

Just as the minister and clerk recite alter-

nately the versicles and responses that immediately follow the Lord's Prayer in this service, so in like manner was Samuel's declaration with the ring dealt with. Minister: "With this ring." Samuel: "I thee wed." Minister: "With my body." Samuel: "I thee worship." This responsive division of sentence was maintained to the end.

When William was bidden to say, "With this ring I thee wed," he at once responded, "With this ring I thee well." Minister: "I thee wed." William: "I thee with." Minister: "I thee *wed*." William: "I thee *with*." The further he went, the deeper he plunged. "With my body I thee washing," was his next insensate rendering. Before correction, he weakly imagined he was following the dictation of the minister by saying, "And with all my wealthy goods, I thee and thou."

What sense or meaning could Robert possibly find in the sentences which he addressed to his bride, with apparent satisfaction: "With this ring I be wed; with my body thee be worship?"

It was Christmas-tide, and turkeys and geese were much in evidence, when William and his bride presented themselves for marriage. Whether he had promised her a goose beforehand, we could not tell. Certain it was, he promised her in the service his "worldly goose."

A solemn ratification of the covenant is made by an invocation of the Holy Trinity ; and this, like all the special portions the bridegrooms have to take, has by many of them been so mutilated and distorted that in their mouths it has been deprived of all sense and meaning. We have notes of many ludicrous instances, but think it advisable altogether to omit them.

Before passing to the next chapter, we must notice a curious incident that occurred to a bridegroom whose name was Peter. At the very time he was engaged with the ceremonies connected with the ring, he was greatly disturbed and extremely annoyed by an irreverent fly, that persisted in tickling his nose. The fly appeared to discern that it had Peter at a disadvantage, and made the most of the oppor-

tunity, giving him an extra titillating whilst his right hand was engaged in holding the ring, and his attention fixed upon what the clergyman was instructing him to say. Peter attempted to give the intruder a left-hander, but missed it; the troubler found it was time to desist, and departed while it had the opportunity of doing so.

SECTION XXIX

"LET US PRAY"

“ Oh ! beware, beware !
'Tis no vain promise, no unmeaning word,
Lo ! men and angels list the faith ye swear,
And by the High and Holy One 'tis heard.
Oh ! then kneel humbly at His altar now,
And pray for strength to keep the marriage vow ! ”

WE know that in late years some persons have—because the law considers and treats it as marriage—been contented with being put together, within the space of three minutes, in an office, without prayer or any semblance of religion. But if they be satisfied with such marriage, certainly professing Christians ought not to be ; they ought not to allow themselves to be put to shame by poor, benighted heathens, who, without any knowledge of the

Bible, have looked upon their marriages as inauspicious if they were not accompanied with a sacrifice.

When the minister at James's marriage had given this little exhortation to prayer, the bridegroom, instead of showing readiness to comply, said, "That ain't on." His mind could not be in serenity and in a fit state for prayer whilst the wedding-ring was on the wrong side of the bride's knuckle. The tightness of the ring greatly exercised his mind and taxed his ingenuity, and the crisis with it had to be successfully passed before he could regain sweet composure. The minister obligingly yielded to the pressing circumstances. The sedate bride, who was fifty-three years of age, immediately rendered valuable help, so that, by the united efforts, the ministerial request was presently obeyed.

In the same class with George a place must be awarded to David. His capabilities being on a similar level, he saw no inconsistency in saying, "Amen, let us pray." It was precisely the same with John: the same ludicrous mis-

take was made by him. That we may not be too hard upon these poor dullards, it will only be fair to state that we think it probable they would not all have fallen into the blunder had the clergyman who married them been a trifle slower, and allowed a reasonable pause to have intervened between the “Amen” and the words “Let us pray.” They followed each other so closely that the poor grooms, in their ignorance, were unaware that they were tacking two distinct matters together.

SECTION XXX

THE RATIFICATION

“ Each fond heart now lightly veers
With alternate hopes and fears ;
Each fond heart now sweetly glows
With love's rapturous joys and woes.”

THE first prayer having been offered, the minister is required to join the bridegroom's and bride's hands and ratify the marriage, saying in our Saviour's words, “ Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.” The clergyman should not on this occasion, as when they were ready to plight their troth, ask them to join their hands ; this was necessary before the matrimonial link was formed, but now they are married he should in silence take each by the right hand, join them, then hold their united hands with his

whilst he makes the ratification. Shepherd says that this joining is to be formed by his (the priest's) hands applied to their right hands. The injunction thus made by the minister is a sign that the man and woman are joined not by themselves nor by man, but by God.

The expressive termination of the marriage ceremony has, notwithstanding the plainness of the Rubrical directions and the simplicity of its requirements, been performed in divers ways and in varied manners by the nine score clergymen with whom we have been acquainted. Their methods have ranged from those who have repeated the words, unaccompanied by any action, to those who have not only joined their hands but have coiled a portion of their stole around the happy couple's united hands. The most comical form that we have seen adopted presented an interesting tableau of three persons holding each other by the hand, the centre figure being the clergyman, who retained the bride with his right hand and the bridegroom with his left while he said, "Those whom God hath joined together."

Some of our ten thousand bridegrooms have shown great ignorance and inability to grasp the significance of this part of this interesting and scriptural service. Having already been required twice to join hands with his bride, Thomas was weak enough, on being told to do it a third time, to join his own together ! What purpose could he possibly suppose that would serve ? What could such an action illustrate but his own dulness and lack of perception ?

Edward paid great attention to the words, but did not repeat them. He reflected upon the contingency, although it was not very likely to happen in his case. Immediately after the passage had been recited, the bridegroom said to the reverend gentleman : " We mustn't go to the workhouse, or they'd part us." The clergyman wisely allowed the untimely remark to pass unnoticed.

Rosanna could not refrain from being responsive in this part of the service. On hearing the minister ratify her marriage with a widower aged sixty-six, she gave a loud and significant " Amen," as if it were her object to

impress upon her groom the great fact that she was really his, and that nought but death had any right to separate them. If she had misgivings as to the soundness of his faith and firmness of his resolution upon this point, he did not keep her long in doubt. Before many months elapsed he left her and permanently placed a distance of more than a hundred miles between them.

Although not provided for by the Prayer Book, or expected by the minister to be heard, there was a certain sense of propriety and meaning in the "Amens" above mentioned; but this is more than can be said of another George's response. He would have shown more wisdom had he held his peace, as we think that none but himself could understand the purport of his remark. When he heard the minister say, "Those whom God," &c., George immediately said, "Yes."

Now for a word of advice to bashful young ladies who get married at the age of forty-five and upwards. Please don't put your gloves on the moment after the ring is on. Don't let your

hands or your gloves engage your thoughts, but give your whole attention to the service until it is quite completed. Let your bridesmaid or your pocket retain your gloves until after the marriage register has been signed. Not having had this excellent advice to guide her, Susannah, instead of attending to and joining in the prayer that was being offered, busied herself with putting on her gloves, only to find immediately she had finished that she had to take the right one off, as the minister then had to clasp the hand with the bridegroom's. This created within her great frustration and caused a break in the service, the clergyman having to make a long pause whilst this was being effected.

SECTION XXXI

THE CONCLUSION OF THE SERVICE

“Christ, we come before Thee, on this happy day ;
Thine all priceless blessing, grant us now we pray :
With this Christian bridegroom, with this Christian bride
Be Thou ever present, Lord, and Life, and Guide.”

ALTHOUGH all is now complete that is necessary to the validity of a marriage, the service of the Church of England does not end here. Marriage in the Church is treated as a sacred and religious ordinance, and in the service is included the reading of a portion of God's Word and the offering of prayer. God's blessing being so needed for the future well-being of the wedded pair, it is again and again asked for.

The passage of Scripture appointed to be

read is one of the Psalms. Two have been given for the minister to select from. The first of the two, the one hundred and twenty-eighth, is most suitable at the marriage of young persons. And the other Psalm, the sixty-seventh, at the marriage of persons half a century old and upwards.

A young bridegroom, immediately before the service commenced, slipped into the writer's hand a note containing this request: "Will you please ask the clergyman to make the service as short as possible and use the forty-seventh Psalm; by so doing you will greatly oblige." To use the forty-seventh Psalm was a novel application, and one that could not be acceded to. Although it is a joyous Psalm, and bids all the people to clap their hands and sing, the compilers of our Prayer Book considered it to be more appropriate in the service on Ascension Day than for use in the marriage ceremony.

Wheatley says, "It is certain that Psalms are very fit to attend a Marriage Solemnity, which was ever reputed a time of joy and generally

attended with Songs and Music. Solomon's spouse was brought to him with Joy and Gladness. And in the Nuptials of the Gentiles, nothing was more usual than Minstrels and Musical instruments. . . . The Church hath hallowed our Joy by chusing holy Psalms for the exercise and expression of it, in obedience to the Precept of the Apostle St. James, who, when we are merry, bids us sing Psalms."

After the Psalm the Lord's Prayer is offered, and then supplications in the form of versicles and responses. In these all the marriage party and friends present in church may join, and show, as Christians should, that they feel an interest in the welfare of the bridegroom and the bride. But instead of this it is commonly the case for too many who are present in church on such occasions to give practical proof that they are only lookers-on; that they have come to witness a show or to scrutinise the bride's dress and observe the manner in which the lady and her groom comport themselves.

The three prayers that follow are to be said

by the minister alone. The first is for spiritual blessings. The second is for the temporal blessing of children, which is the chief end of marriage, and which is the blessing that God pronounced at first to Adam and Eve, and which all mankind hath ever since wished to newly-married persons, and which is therefore always to be asked at the solemnisation of a marriage, except the advanced age of the person makes our prayers unlikely to prevail, in which case our Rubric has therefore ordered it to be omitted. The last prayer is made for the accomplishing of those duties which are aptly signified and implied by marriage. The devotional part of the service concludes with a blessing.

Whilst delivering this address, one of our nine score clergymen made a running comment as he proceeded. After the words "Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself," he said to the bridegroom, who was a working man, "If you do that, you won't spend your money in drink or in buying a lot of tobacco, or keep away from your home

in the evening ; but you will give your money to your wife for her to do her best with in making things comfortable, and you will rather be at home in your cottage than anywhere else."

When James, at the age of sixty-four, made a fresh launch on the sea of life, the minister in his address not only gave him excellent advice as to the manner in which he should conduct himself, but expressed the hope that both he and his wife would be happy. When he said, " May your new married life be a very happy one," James was so delighted by it that he instantly responded, " Thank you, sir."

As the Rubric allows the minister either to read the scriptural address or give one in the stead of it, the latter has often been adopted, and many excellent exhortations have been heard, the majority of them being extempore. We will insert specimens :—

" William and Annie, you have come to this church this morning to be joined together in holy matrimony, and to ask a blessing upon it from your Father in heaven. This is one of

the most solemn periods of your life. You will go forth from this church as man and wife to tread life's chequered path together. You will have the good wishes of your friends that your career may be a bright and a happy one. I trust it may be so. You are both young and strong, but we know not what is before you; you must look up to God and ask Him to bless you—to forgive the past and help you to lead a happy life in the fear of God. If sickness comes and lays the husband low, it will be the duty of the wife to do all she can to help and comfort him. And should the wife be overtaken with illness, it will be the husband's duty to do all in his power to raise her up. You must both look to your heavenly Father for help. Clouds will come across your path, but if you look up you will see a smiling Providence overruling and directing all. May God preserve you and help you to walk life's path happily together. And if God should give you children, for their immortal souls' sake train them up in the fear and love of God. And when death comes and separates wife

from husband, or husband from wife, it will only be for a time : you will meet again in a brighter and a better world, where there is no more parting, but where you will be for ever with the Lord. May God help you so to live that it may be so, for Christ's sake. Amen."

" My friends, I should like now to say a few words to you. The step you have taken this morning is no ordinary step. You have come into God's presence and have made solemn vows each to the other. That ring that has been placed upon your finger is a token and pledge of the vows you have now made. You have sworn to be faithful to each other. *You* have sworn to love, honour, and obey your husband ; and *you* have sworn to love, honour, and protect your wife until death. God has heard those vows as they proceeded from your lips, and they are now registered in heaven. Now you are both old enough, and you have been long enough in the world, to know how slippery the path of life is, and to know how many men — and women too — go wrong. What temptations there are to lead you

astray! You must ask God day by day to help you, and He will help you. You are now going forth to new duties; you must help each other all you can. You must both try to make your home the happiest one upon earth. You must try to make it, to you, with the exception of God's House, the brightest spot upon earth. Remember, the more you bring into your home, the more you will get out of it: your home will be what you make it. Bring happiness into your home and you will get happiness out of it. You will need help from God; don't keep away from His House, as so many do, but come as often as possible. Remember you were brought into it to be baptized; you have now come and made marriage vows; and, though I have no wish to throw gloom over your marriage day, it is well to remember that you will one day be brought here in a very different condition from that you are now in. As the sun now shines brightly upon us, may the sunshine of the love of God shine upon you in your new home. May God

bless you, send you help, and keep you faithful to your marriage vows to the end of life, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

A clergyman, when about to give an extempore address, commenced in this manner: "Er! May I congratulate you?" and then, making a pause, the groom instantly assured him by audibly replying, "Yes." About two hundred persons were present.

SECTION XXXII

MINISTERIAL CONGRATULATIONS

“ O Christ, the King of human life,
In royal bounty pour
On these Thy servants, man and wife,
Thy blessing evermore.”

“ The Lord that made heaven and earth, give thee blessing
out of Sion.”—Ps. cxxxiv. 4.

IN addition to the graceful little allocutions, full of good advice and good wishes, that have been given at the closing part of the service, many clergymen, on taking their leave of happy couples in the vestry, have added a few pleasant words of congratulation.

With gentlemanly courtesy a majority of the clergy have taken their leave of those they married, and in a few parting words have

expressed their kindly feelings and good wishes. I give a few specimens :—

“ I wish you every happiness in your new life, and God’s blessing upon it.”

“ I have tried to make you happy, now you must follow up the attempt.”

“ I have done all I can for you, now you must do the best you can for yourselves.”

“ You begin with sunshine, I hope you will go on with it.”

“ I wish you all the happiness you can wish for yourselves.”

“ Well, God bless ye both.”

When the minister bade Robert and his bride Goodbye, the groom at once replied, “ God bless ye.”

A young clergyman, fresh to the matrimonial part of his work, said to his first rejoicing bridegroom, “ I wish you many happy returns.” Though well meant, it sounded somewhat equivocal.

When congratulations and good wishes were given to George and his bride by the minister, George in reply said, “ After this day I’m a

teetotaler. I've spent many and many a pound foolishly. I ought to have been a man in the world by this time" (he was in his forty-fifth year). "After this day I'm a teetotaler." This confession and resolve gave the clergyman a good opportunity to encourage and advise him as to his future course.

SECTION XXXIII

IRREVERENT LAUGHTER

“Man’s risibles distinguish him from brute ;
While instinct, reason, both in common own,
To laugh is man’s prerogative alone.”

J. M. SEWALL.

“What is the matter, foolish giglotte? what meanest thou? whereat laughest thou?”—UDAL, *Flowers of Latine Speaking*.

THE laughter that has been indulged in by light-hearted and rejoicing individuals in wedding parties has arisen more from the happy and exciting circumstances of the occasion than from any fixed desire or settled determination to act with impropriety within the sacred building.

It is a sad fact that members of the working

classes are seldom seen within the walls of a church and joining in the services on Sundays, consequently they feel but little reverence when they enter on a week-day to attend a marriage ceremonial with a party of light-hearted and frolicsome companions. After the nuptial ceremony a bridegroom said to the writer, "I was bred and born here, and I have lived here fifty-two years, and was never in this church but once before in my life, and that was when a young woman was buried."

We will introduce a specimen of those who have thoughtlessly permitted themselves to indulge in inopportune laughter.

We are all aware that the nomadic life and surroundings of gipsies are not conducive to strict propriety of conduct, or helpful to promote reverential demeanour.

A young gipsy bride, in the midst of the service, seemed for a time to lose all control over herself, and yielded to unrestrained laughter. It all arose from her gipsy bridegroom making a mistake with the ring, endeavouring to place it upon her *little* finger. This

tickled her so immensely that she laughed convulsively. Her unseemly behaviour brought the service to a standstill, the minister, in a kind manner, doing his best to check and steady her. For a while all was in vain ; she laughed persistently, until tears came that had to be wiped from her eyes. Then she suddenly paused, and looking the clergyman earnestly in the face, imploringly said to him, “ Pardon me, sir, I can’t help it.”

Like many grooms, James was determined not to be deprived of the privilege of being the first to salute his bride after marriage. In his impetuosity to make sure of it, he attempted to kiss her *before* he had wedded her instead of waiting till he had placed the ring upon her finger. This was seen to be so ridiculous that both the bride and himself could not refrain from laughing. It was an absurd mistake for a man who had previously been married to make.

SECTION XXXIV

TEARS! JOYOUS TEARS!

“I saw thee weep—the big bright tear
Came o’er that eye of blue ;
And then methought it did appear
A violet dropping dew.”—BYRON.

“They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.”—Ps. cxxvi. 6.

THAT the above is an anomalous title must be confessed ; but it is none the less appropriate to the section that introduces to its readers a select assemblage of tear-bedewed bridegrooms and brides.

Although tear-shedding, whatever may be its cause, does appear untimely and inappropriate to the festive time of marriage, it is far more seemly, and enlists more admiring

sympathy, than indecorous giggling. The latter is never acceptable amid sacred duties, be the function ever so joyous. When tears accompany the marriage ceremonial, they generally arise from nervous agitation ; and they sometimes betoken sober, chastened feelings that realise the vast importance of the step then being taken. 'Tis a momentous crisis in a lady's life ; and instead of being considered weak, such brides, if united to true manhood, undoubtedly find—

“That their lovers prize them none the less
For such dew on their morning's happiness.”

It might reasonably be expected that this section would be exclusively devoted to the more emotional sex ; but such will be found to be by no means the case.

(a) TEARFUL BRIDES.

Tears were not expected by Selina, or she would surely have made better provision to meet their requirements. They came, however, not in a premature, hurried manner,

but stayed until bridegroom and bride had completed their parts of the ceremony. Then in a quiet and unobtrusive manner, when all were on their knees, the tear-fountain opened, and welling over required immediate attention. The bride then discovered the inconvenience of having left her handkerchief at home ; and in the emergency she borrowed, and made use of, the bridegroom's. So the first kind service he was able to render after making her his own, was by lending her his pocket-handkerchief to wipe bright, joyous little teardrops from her suddenly bedimmed eyes.

Sophia was another light-hearted bride who had no expectation of tears of any character at her bridal ; and in her thoughtless joy had overlooked the possibility of requiring a pocket-handkerchief, so she came to church to be married without having one in her pocket. But as is sometimes the case, the unexpected happened. When we discover ourselves to be minus a handkerchief we usually require one the more. Uninvited tears made their appearance, but they found her equal to the emer-

gency. Without any hesitation or ado, she plunged her hand into the coat pocket of her brother who was standing on her left hand, and without a thought of asking his permission, took possession of his handkerchief, used it, and placed it in her *own* pocket.

Poor Sarah was so dreadfully nervous and agitated that she could shed tears more freely than she could speak ; but no sympathising aid was forthcoming from her bridegroom. He, in the coarseness of his nature, was annoyed on finding her utterance impeded by emotion when giving her troth, and instead of trying to cheer her, he unfeelingly said, "Go on ; don't be so soft."

(b) LACHRYMOSE BRIDEGROOMS.

Instead of rejoicing over his bride, in a manner worthy of an Englishman, Samuel, the very instant he had said, "I, Samuel, take thee, Ann," began to snivel !

His tears so choked his utterance that, after taking Ann to his wedded wife, he could hardly make the required promises. This being the

case, and finding matters were growing worse with him, the bride found it necessary to say to him, in a soothing tone, "Don't be so silly." This comforting admonition revived him a little, made him feel better, and he was then able to say a few more words of betrothal. The improvement, however, was very transient, he soon choked again, and felt the need of a little more of the bride's kind help.

When a man is matrimonially engaged in church, it is very ridiculous of him to sink "below par." If E.'s bridegroom was at his usual level on that inspiring occasion, we must regard him as an individual not endowed with brilliant parts, or favoured with masculine abilities, as there was little that was manly in his performance. When he saw his bride take off her gloves and pass them to the bridesmaid, he thought the latter ought to take care of his as well, so he withdrew them from his hands, and instead of placing them in his own pocket in a manly way, he stretched himself beyond the bride towards the bridesmaid, who was the third person on his left hand standing

in a line from him. Whilst he was trying to arrest her attention, the "daddy," who was next the bride, seized them and quickly put them out of sight. The groom, thus relieved, was in readiness to engage in the service. This soon deeply affected him. Signals of mental distress became apparent. He passed into a melting condition at an early stage of the proceedings, finding sufficient in what fell from ministerial lips or from his own cogitations for tear-shedding, he allowed them to flow so freely, it was matter for regret that no one present possessed a lachrymatory. Such uncommon matrimonial dew-drops ought to have been preserved.

His bride was a cheerful spinster, about the bridegroom's own age, a respectably conducted person, and suitable to be the wife of a working man. Everything, so far as we could judge, was consistent and appropriate, except the tears, and of them there was no lack. Freely and fully Robert allowed them to flow, so that by the time he entered the vestry he looked a model that would have suited an artist on the look-

out for a lachrymose face. His visual condition was more appropriate for a young woman who had lost her lover than that of a man who had been gaining an excellent wife. Not only were his eyes soddened, but an area around them testified to the amount of rubbing and wiping they had been subjected to. When in the retirement of the vestry his bride affectionately smiled at him, and in a loving, sympathetic manner said, "You silly thing, what made you do so?" It was evidently his peculiar method of showing the depth and reality of his joy.

Bridegrooms have been subjected to influences of various kinds at the time of their marriage, and the effect of some of these influences has been of an extremely disturbing character. That arising from rum, for instance, is very "upsetting." But with spirituous influences we have not to deal in this section, this being specially devoted to nervous emotions and lackadaisical feelings. Very much of the latter were exhibited by Benjamin. Still we must not be hard upon him,

but make due allowance for circumstances. When he was bidden by the clergyman to say, "I, Benjamin, take thee, Mary Ann," his heart became so very full that it was a task requiring great effort to say even this much. He had come to church on purpose to say it, yet when he tried he could scarcely manage it.

A noteworthy and unexpected instance was given by a bright, intelligent young bridegroom of active business habits and occupation. Immediately after signing the register, to our surprise he turned aside from his joyous bridal party, some of whom were busily engaged in attaching their autographs to the marriage entry, and losing control of his feelings, yielded to a genuine outburst of tears, and with both hands held his handkerchief before his face to hide the exhibition and catch the tears. The incongruity of his condition he quickly realised, and made the required effort to suppress the untimely and extraordinary ebullition.

SECTION XXXV

SALUTING THE BRIDE

“ He took the bride about the neck,
And kissed her lips with such a clamorous smack
That, at the parting, all the church did echo.”

Taming of the Shrew.

THE kissing under observation in this section is by no means the casual, unpremeditated kissing of friends ; nor may it be confused, or compared, with the kissing that is welcomed in ordinary life ; it is a speciality. It is the definite, highly-prized, first salutation the bride receives after the completion of matrimonial formalities. The bridegroom has the earliest and strongest claim to the privilege, but many grooms have been deprived of it, chiefly by the friend who gave the bride away. Some-

times both men have been equally determined to have it; and unseemly struggles have ensued between them.

In pre-Reformation times, before the bridal party left the church, the priest gave the bridegroom a benedictional kiss, which was duly passed on by him to his bride, he immediately kissing her upon the lips. The bridegroom thus gave the bride the first kiss after marriage. In this fact, doubtless, lies the origin of the esteem in which the first kissing of the bride is still held by many persons. Neither the bride nor the groom in those days kissed or was kissed by any of the wedding guests whilst in the church. But after the bride had received, through the bridegroom, the sacerdotal "pax," an ecclesiastical assistant received from the presbyter a holy kiss, which he conveyed to the bridal guests, kissing each of them in succession. After this official salutation, the married couple, with their attendant friends, left the church. On the restoration of the papal power and Romish customs under Queen Mary, the parochial clergy were directed

to report to their ecclesiastical superior all persons who declined to receive the sacerdotal kiss at marriage. One of the Articles of Visitation in the diocese of London in the year 1554, ran thus : "Item, whether there be any that refuseth to kysse the prieste at the solemnization of matrimony, or use any such lyke ceremonies heretofore used and observed in the church."

A decided inclination for such indulgence is often unblushingly shown by gentlemen in marriage parties when in the vestry. They esteem it one of the special privileges connected with a wedding. The example they set is found by the ladies to be contagious, and they engage heartily in it ; so that many brides find that signing the register is by no means the only thing they have to attend to within the precincts of the vestry. By way of exception to the general rule, William's young bride reversed the usual order. In the exuberance of her spirits she was unable to wait until the vestry had been entered, and there receive the warm salutations and con-

gratulations of her friends, but, contrary to the established rule of all well-regulated marriage parties, she, before leaving the communion rails, boldly advanced along the line of her assembled friends, and, without an exception, saluted them all.

It is chiefly among the humbler classes that great eagerness is shown to be the first "to kiss the bride." It has often been perceptible that the groom and the friend who attended to give away the bride were rivals who were fully aware of each other's intention and firm resolution to have the first kiss. So both have been actively on the alert with thoughts more intent upon the securing the coveted prize than of devotionally engaging in the service. Some bridegrooms have, in their determination not to be defrauded of it, been too precipitate, and have given the kiss before the marriage has been completed. A few of them subsequently found the satisfaction they enjoyed to be very short-lived; their friendly antagonists with, more correct views of the matter, having waited until the termination of the ceremonial,

and then have really had the first kiss after the marriage, to the discomfiture of the awakened grooms. Other bridegrooms have lost the expected pleasure through very properly deferring it until the moment had arrived when, with due propriety, they would have been able to give it. Their less scrupulous friends have, however, taken a mean advantage by supplanting them whilst the service was still progressing. The pair are really married the instant the bridegroom has completed his statement on placing the ring upon the bride's finger. The first kiss the bride may receive after that is her first kiss after marriage. Being aware of this, some "daddies" have surprised both bride and bridegroom by irreverently kissing the former as the whole party were about to kneel for prayer. Occasionally a simultaneous rush has been made by the two excited individuals, the groom oftentimes coming off second best.

William was one of the indiscriminating bridegrooms. With poor judgment and lack of discernment he considered the time had arrived

to obtain the coveted kiss, when he was directed to take the bride's right hand, preparatory to his plighting his troth. So before he had even made his pledge the ignoramus gave her what he imagined to be the first kiss after marriage ! His friend, who possessed a few more grains of common-sense than he did, saw the palpable blunder the groom had made, and quietly waited until the service had ended ; then with the keenest satisfaction he gave the first kiss.

To all appearance Daniel and his bride had mutually determined that no other than the groom should be the first to give a salute, after they were united in the bonds of holy matrimony, for at the very first instant they had become man and wife they gave each other a warm and affectionate kiss. Then, with all seeming gravity, they attended to the remainder of the service.

George secured the coveted salute, but the moment he selected for the purpose was a very inappropriate one. Whilst all were upon their knees, and the minister was engaged in offering prayer, the bridegroom, instead of thank-

fully and heartily joining in it, seeking a blessing upon his union, not only left the praying to the clergyman, so far as he himself was concerned, but also withdrew his wife's attention from devotion by irreverently kissing her. Even good things are objectionable when presented at unseasonable times.

Fifty years of the world's buffetings sat lightly upon Robert. He was very joyous and light-hearted at his second marriage. The bride was a widow of about the same age. Whilst the minister was pronouncing the blessing immediately preceding the Psalm, signs of restlessness could be seen in the groom. He did not appear to be fully attending to, and joining with the clergyman in seeking a blessing, but appeared to be more intent upon something else. Quietly and surreptitiously he placed his arm round his bride, in readiness to embrace and kiss her the moment the benediction had been recited. But for some occult reason he prematurely withdrew it, and by so doing he instantly found he had lost the advantage it would have given

him in securing the first kiss. Before the Psalm was commenced, a struggle was made by the two middle-aged men to be the first to salute the bride, and the contest ended in the groom's discomfiture. He became very excited, and had to be reminded that the service was not finished. When in the vestry he, in a measure, compensated himself for the loss he had sustained, by kissing the bridesmaid, who was his supplanter's wife, and then to make matters quite satisfactory he gave his bride a warm salute.

When A.'s bride was in the act of signing the marriage register, a man, quite unconnected with the party, entered the vestry in a hurried and irreverent manner, and without introduction or apology, without consulting propriety or convenience, saluted the bride. Such rude obtrusiveness was objectionable, and, as we presently discovered, its intention was reprehensible. No sooner was his purpose accomplished than he said triumphantly, "There, I've won the bob!" evidently supposing that his rude salute was the first kiss the bride had

received after marriage. We had much pleasure in knowing that in this he was much mistaken, as the groom, with the greatest promptitude, had given the kiss the very instant the formalities with the ring were completed.

The most pleasing demonstration of an osculatory character that we remember to have witnessed in the service, was when a youthful brother, on taking the hand of his young sister bride to present it to the clergyman, before he made the surrender, in a quiet, unostentatious manner, twice kissed it. Such an action we deem worthy of a place in these anecdotal records, as sons of poor, labouring men, as a rule, are not prone to show in public much affection for their sisters.

SECTION XXXVI

SIGNING THE MARRIAGE REGISTER

“Tom praised his friend, who changed his state,
For binding fast himself and Kate

In union so divine.

‘Wedlock’s the end of life,’ he cried.

‘Too true, alas!’ said Jack, and sighed,

‘Twill be the end of mine.’”

“We all wole this solempn dede record devowtly.”

Ancient Mystery.

UNTIL Lady Day in the year 1754, no signatures were attached to the entries in the marriage registers of the Church of England. The names of the persons married, their condition, viz. (whether bachelor or widower, spinster or widow), and the parish they resided in, were the only details that were recorded. In that year came into operation the Act of

Parliament known as Lord Hardwick's Act. This was passed chiefly to put an end to the scandals of the Fleet and May Fair marriages. From that time to the present the signatures of the minister who solemnised the marriage, the parties married, and at least two witnesses, have been required to every entry. Until July, 1837, only one entry of each marriage was made and signed. On the first day of that month the Act came into force that required each marriage to be entered into two register books, the second to be an exact copy of the other.

We find in the marriage register of our parish church that ninety marriages were recorded within the twelve months that ended Lady Day, 1755. Of the one hundred and eighty persons who were married during that period, eighty-five were unable to write their names. Thirty men and fifty-five women made their marks in the entries; and extraordinary marks some of them were. Some that were intended for crosses were of remarkable shape. Amongst them we find an uneven

line more than an inch long, with a long pennon streaming from the top of it; two sides of a square with an oblique position; crosses of which the lines met somewhere by accident; some represented by only one short stroke instead of two; and some have the appearance of tangled knots. Besides these were fish-hooks in various positions; horizontal pothooks; badly formed eggs, or circles; crude attempts to form the initials of names, and hieroglyphics too difficult to describe.

Passing over one century to the twelve months from Lady Day, 1854, to Lady Day, 1855, in the register books of the same church, we find two hundred and sixty-one marriages recorded. Of the five hundred and twenty-two persons then married, three hundred and twenty-two signed their names, and ninety men and one hundred and ten women made crosses.

From Lady Day, 1893, to Lady Day, 1894, when the Education Act had been exerting its mighty influences for twenty-three years, we find amongst the signatures of the four hun-

dred and sixty-six persons who were married during that period only nine men and thirteen women who were unable to write their names.

Among the unfortunate things that seldom have a word spoken in their favour, vestry pens may be classed. When they afford opportunity for praise by being in a condition to deserve it, discreet silence is usually observed. To roundly abuse vestry pens is often indulged in and found a great relief, as much nervous blundering can in this way be cloaked. They are found fault with just as tools are when in the hands of incompetent workmen. For instance, when the attention of John was drawn to the way in which he had written his name—"Jhon"—he glanced at the signature and then looked contemptuously at the nib of the pen still in his hand, and said, "Yes—bad pen." He blamed the pen because he had spelt his own name wrong. That vestry pens sometimes deserve the hard things said of them we have no doubt; it would be surprising did they not, as they pass through very trying

ordeals. When dipping in the ink, some persons have then dealt with them as if they were paint, or whiting brushes ; others commence operations by violently striking the bottom of the ink-well, taking a deep dip, and then with a jerk from the pen throw some of the superfluous ink behind them, at the imminent risk of spoiling the bride's or bridesmaid's dress.

A deep sigh of relief was heard when Phœbe's "daddy" completed the task of writing his own name. The bridesmaid, noticing it, said to him, "You sighed." He replied, "That's getting up off the book." He might have said, "getting up off the pen." Had that instrument been sentient, it would have given a responsive sigh of relief when rescued from the oppressor's hand. Elizabeth's friend might well say, "The pens are hard, they have been well worked." Hard work indeed do many men make of writing their names. When William, a young man of twenty, found he had to sign his name in two books, he said, "I shall do more pen and ink

work this morning, governor, than I have done the last twelvemonth."

Brides have not left all the hard dealing with the pen to the men; they have had a good share in it. When Elizabeth, a spinster bride of forty-six, was in the act of making a huge and impressive dot over the "i," her action was so vigorous and weighty that she crushed the pen. "I've broke it, clerk, I've broke the pen," she exclaimed; and she had not done it in a partial manner, both nibs were gone—nothing but a stump was left.

(a) THE BRIDEGROOM'S.

The real fact of the matter has been the nervous tension that has been responsible for much of the giggling, crying, and other irregularities we have witnessed during the progress of the service, has been still in operation, disturbing the formalities that have to be observed in the vestry; and instead of this being duly acknowledged, the unfortunate pens have often been made the scapegoats, and have had to

bear the brunt of the blame. That honest confessions have been made we readily admit ; and amongst our open and above-board bridegrooms, we give Albert a prominent place. Whilst he was very busy doing his level best with the pen, he looked up, and, by way of apology for his caligraphical performance, said to the clergyman, "You've unnerved me this morning, sir." "How is that?" inquired the reverend gentleman. "I've done such a thing I've never done in my life before," was his reply. The advice he then received was, "Then you mustn't do it again." Albert said, "I hope not," and resumed his writing.

Samuel was very nervous when signing his names. Instead of plainly jotting down that he was Samuel Dawson, he described himself as "Sawson Dawson."

I. was a man of business, and of business habits, so he entered the sacred building with pen perched upon the top of his right ear, ready for action when required.

Now for a party of old folk who tried in various ways to show how light-hearted they

were. When the pen was offered the groom and he was told to write his name, instead of accepting it, he replied, "I ain't no reading, sir." Not having any reading we could expect no writing, so he was let off with marking a cross against his name. The bride declined the pen, giving as the reason, "I ain't no larning," adding in a tone of unabashed satisfaction, "We're all alike."

(b) THE BRIDE'S.

By the time that E. had reached the vestry, she was revelling in the thought that she had acquired a new name; that she was no longer Miss R. but Mrs. B., and as Mrs. B. she was now prepared to assert herself. An opportunity was not long in presenting itself. The marriage register demanded her immediate attention. The very first thing she had to do after marriage was to sign her name. This was very delightful, as without any delay it would afford her the pleasure of seeing her new name in black and white, and of observing how it looked. But, after receiving the pen, she,

instead of looking to see how her husband had spelt his surname, on becoming perplexed, turned to the bridesmaid and confidentially asked her, "How do ye spell Brooks?" This was her new name, and she, on this first attempt to write it, could not make the letters run to her satisfaction. The bridesmaid, instead of telling her she didn't quite know, with much confidence replied "B-r-o-c-k." Finding there was hesitation and difficulty, we drew the bride's attention from her misleading maid, and made her way clear by making known to her that the name she had to write was the one she had all her life been familiar with. Another bride, instead of being solicitous respecting her new name, sought guidance as to the spelling of her maiden name, as she was desirous not to make a blunder in the marriage book. She turned from the register, and inquired of her friend who had given her away, "How do ye spell Sutton?" With all the assurance of an experienced pedagogue the "daddy" spelt it, "S-u-t-e-n."

A bride, who was unable to write her own

name, but was able to read writing, watched us very closely whilst we were engaged writing it for her in order that she might place her mark against it. When she saw we had jotted down her maiden name, she thought she had caught us napping, so she promptly said, "You've wrote my name wrong—my name is Giles, my name is Giles!" and the repetition was made with the energy that might be expected from a Mrs. Giles of a year's standing, rather than from one who had only been able to claim the name a few minutes.

A new experience was afforded by Charles's youthful bride. The instant she had completed her signature in the second register she inquired whether we had "done with" her ; and on finding that to be the case she abruptly took her departure, leaving her friends behind her in the vestry. This being a strange and unexpected procedure, it was supposed she suddenly became unwell, and we advised the groom to go after her to see what was amiss, and tell her she could have a glass of water if she felt faint. On his return he entered the vestry alone ; his

offers of assistance had not been accepted, and the bride had gone on her way. Feeling curious to know the cause of this unusual proceeding, we sought explanation of the bridegroom, whom we could see was in no degree disturbed by the absence of the lady, and in reply to our query, he said in a very calm and resigned tone, "Well, you see, it's very trying for a woman!"

There being two registers to sign, a favourable opportunity has been afforded of showing what tremulous and excited persons can do. When directed to sign the second book, they are requested to do it just as in the first. Of course it is easy to some, and a difficult task for others; as, for instance, a bride whose name was Clarinda, signed it correctly in one book and twisted it into "Clavadard" in the other.

Confusion of ideas arising from disturbed brains are not confined to brides, their maids share largely in this. Charlotte's maid was "Mahala Meffin" in one register and "Mahala Mahala" in the other.

(c) THE "DADDY."

The curious fact has often been seen at marriages of the two witnesses present becoming more nervous than the bride and bridegroom. When signing the registers their hands have trembled more, and of the four persons they have been the least able to handle the pen. When the friend who had presented Caroline to the minister was asked to attach his name to the marriage entry, he said, "I don't know as I can, I kind o' shiver."

When M.'s brother, who had presented her to the clergyman, had the pen placed in his hand, he said he could do with a tar-brush best, and, that he might not be too lowly estimated, added, "I'm an artist with a whitening brush."

The man who had given Alice in marriage was much perplexed on finding there was a second register to sign, believing that in the second he would have to enter the bridesmaid's name. He imagined that he was in for a difficult task, so he said, excusing himself, "I can't sign the young woman's name." On being told

that it was not her name, but his own that had once more to be written, he felt greatly relieved.

The youthful days of the man who gave away Sarah were not spent in School Board times, and he had grown to manhood without learning the art of writing. So the offer of a pen to him to inscribe his name was useless. He acknowledged his deficiency in this matter, and as a substitute, he said, "I'll make mill sails."

Unlettered individuals are often very light-hearted over their shortcomings, especially when they are at marriages. Non-writers, for instances, when asked their names, are sometimes very droll in their answers. Mary Ann's friend was one of the amusing sort. Not being able to place his own name upon paper, he, on being asked, replied, "James Watson on Sundays, and Jimmy in the week." The day was Sunday, and his Sunday name was entered.

(d') THE BRIDESMAID'S.

The tilted condition of the mind of Sarah Ann's bridesmaid was reflected in her signature.

In the first book her surname ran "Bixxiex," in the second she wrote "Bixsics."

Fanny's bridesmaid, even in jubilant moments, wished to be cautious and do nothing rash or superfluous. On completing her Christian name she, before proceeding further, paused and inquired whether that was not sufficient. We were sorry we were not able to relieve her from further fatigue, but we were compelled to request the addition of her surname.

Caroline, being her sister's bridesmaid, was quite willing to sign the marriage entry, but doubted her ability to do so. Being requested to do her best, she took the pen, and when she had written "Smith," she thought that, accompanied with an explanation, would be sufficient. She then said, "I can write 'Smith,' I can't write 'Caroline.'"

Many of the disreputable Fleet marriages of the eighteenth century took place in public-houses, and were conducted by clergymen who were no credit to themselves or to the Church to which they belonged. The time of such abominations has happily long since passed,

but we were casually reminded of them by the carelessness and stupidity of Mary Anne's bridesmaid, who, instead of signing her names in the place provided and on the line pointed out to her, placed it amidst the heading of the next wedding entry, causing its preamble to read thus, "Marriage solemnised at the 'Jane King' in the Parish," &c.

Before passing the pen to Isabella's bridesmaid, in order that she might make an acceptable signature, we asked, "Have you more than one Christian name?" She smiled pleasantly and replied, "Yes, I have six." That the number was considered quite satisfactory was evident. At our request she favoured us with the imposing list, and a queer collection of names it proved to be. She was instructed to write the first name in full, and to initial the remaining five, and she did so. On a subsequent day we obtained an inkling as to the probable manner in which she obtained the complete set. In the previous year she was herself a bride, and at that time her Christian names numbered five. By getting married, she obtained, as brides usually do, a

new name, but instead of quietly dropping her former name, as brides are expected to do, she, prizing it too much to discard it, took the liberty of adding that surname to her already long list. The latter three of the six being surnames, we were led to infer that this tacking on process had been in operation for some time in the family, and that her mother must have indulged in the habit, and passed the accumulated names to her daughter.

The acquisition of new names at marriages so impressed the mind of Elizabeth's bridesmaid, that, although she was one degree removed from a bride, and her name on that occasion would be innocent of change, such was her mental state at this juncture, it was venturous to entrust her with a pen and expect accuracy. But being present as one of two select witnesses of the ceremony, it was her duty to inscribe her name in the register. After yielding to the request, we found, on examination, that instead of making the signature she would have written on ordinary occasions, she had dropped her surname, and gratuitously

appropriated that of the gentleman who had given the bride away!

(e) CLERGYMAN.

We can readily understand, and feel but little surprise, on witnessing various individuals, in joyous marriage parties, showing indications of nervous excitement immediately after the close of the service. But it was strange and unusual to find a clergyman influenced in a similar manner on taking an ordinary marriage without having had previous acquaintance or special interest with any one of the party. Amongst the numerous clergy who have officiated in our church during the period under review, was one who assisted for a short time whilst on furlough from his work in the Colonies. When signing the register after a marriage, he said, while holding the pen in his hand, "I never did write my name well in a marriage register; it makes me nervous—worse than the married couple."

(f) OLLA PODRIDA.

Such illiterate blunderings with the pen as

those that have been sketched in this section will soon become, in a great measure, a thing of the past. The day is at hand when such absurdities as we have seen committed will soon become rarities. Men and women will be able to sign their names twice over, even in marriage registers, without making mistakes. Education will assert itself, notwithstanding nervousness.

The marriage registers have not been the only documents that have been signed by marriage parties when in the vestry. Some have brought their wills with them, not even waiting until they have reached their homes before making them complete, but have signed them immediately upon the completion of the marriage formalities. In one or more instances the persons have been accompanied by a solicitor, and the requisite signatures have been attached. On another occasion an enterprising lady, unattended by a gentleman learned in the law, but ripe with the experience of three betrothals, said by way of an apology for introducing her document, "We can never tell what may happen." Resolving to be on the safe side, she

wished, without loss of time, to have the legal instrument that had been prepared by her solicitors, completed by her own signature and the signature of a witness. This was done, and she left the sacred building gratified and satisfied.

SECTION XXXVII

PAYING THE FEES

“ Fee simple, and a simple fee,
And all the fees in tail,
Are nothing when compared with thee,
Thou best of fees, fe-male.”

WHEN the requisite signatures have been attached to the marriage entry, one more duty remains to be discharged within the vestry, viz., the presenting of “the accustomed duty to the priest and clerk”; or, in more commonplace terms, the payment of marriage fees. With the higher and more refined classes of society this function is entrusted to the “best man,” or principal groomsman, who, on consulting instructions published for his guidance throughout the ceremonial, finds that he is

required "to pay the clergyman his fee, and bestow upon the clerk, pew-opener, and bell-ringers, their *honorarium* according to their various claims." With the lower orders "best men" are conspicuous by their absence; the bridegroom, usually believing that he is the best man of the company, finds himself all-sufficient to present the few coins that are required for the services that have been rendered. This payment has, like every other part of the proceedings, afforded the humbler classes an opportunity of displaying their eccentricities and of producing incidents of various character. After the constrained propriety of the previous half hour the time seems to have fully arrived for a little relief. When the bridegroom's hand is deep down in his pocket, gathering the few loose coins that had been deposited therein, it has been thought a fine opportunity for a little display, and weak flashes of wit that smiling friends have highly welcomed have been let off in connection with the amount that has had to be paid.

The best that Thomas could produce was,

"This blessed job costs me a lot o' money. I'll never get married so young again." William was in a very jocular mood, so he said to the writer, "Dear buying o' women, ain't it, master?" Edward thought it was smart to say to his bride, "You cost me a fortune." John was something like him, and said to his bride, "There's a lot of money you cost me." For a widower forty-six years of age it showed poor judgment to ask his bride, "Do you think you are worth it?" Benjamin's question, although lacking in good taste, was not so pointedly offensive as that of Charles. He sought our opinion with, "Do you think she is worth seven-and-six?" Having obtained both mental and financial relief, the jokers have gone on their way rejoicing with light hearts and lighter pockets.

Some bridegrooms, well knowing that there were fees to be paid, have, with a look of innocence, inquired, "Is there anything to pay?" Amongst these inquirers was Arthur, who was provided with the exact sum he knew would be needed. Another of the seekers after

facts was Joseph, who, after a general gathering together of all his coins, silver and bronze, found the total to be "six-and-six." Of improvident bridegrooms we have had a large number. George may be mentioned as one of them. All the money that he could produce when in the vestry was just the amount of the minister's fee, and as none of his friends had sufficient confidence in him to lend him half a crown, he to this day remains in the clerk's debt.

Amongst our many varieties of bridegrooms have been those who, after paying the fees, have asked for a portion of them back again, thus clearly showing that they had parted from their cash unwillingly and with heavy hearts. One of these unsatisfied individuals was a widower, forty-three years of age. When he laid the seven-and-sixpence upon the vestry table he said, "I suppose you don't give half a crown of it back for luck? Me and my comrade will want a little drink." When George paid he said, "I hope you'll give me out a little bit for luck." As it was not deemed advisable to create a bad precedent, this was declined.

He then said, "If I had known I'd a asked the clergyman." Fortunately the latter had taken his departure.

Actual symptoms of grudging the fees have been shown by some brides as well as by bridegrooms. When Ellen, who was only eighteen, heard the writer say that the fees were seven-and-sixpence, she demurred greatly, and considered that such a sum ought not to be demanded, as she had paid half a crown when she entered the banns. The same parsimonious spirit was shown by E. at his second marriage, when he said, "You ought to do it free gratis. Now I must go and work and get seven-and-sixpence more."

Another class of bridegrooms must not be overlooked in this general survey — a class distrustful of themselves and confiding in the clerk, making him their banker until the day of their marriage by placing the amount of the fees in his possession some days beforehand. Various reasons have prompted them to take this course. Some did not wish to have their minds disturbed by monetary matters on a day

of such exquisite delights. They preferred paying when their minds were clearer and their thoughts steadier, so that less rashness might be connected with their proceedings. In this way the clerk has become a deputy for "best man." Prudential motives arising from other causes have prompted others. Some less-favoured grooms have not always had seven-and-sixpence at command, so to prevent the money from being spent on other matters they impounded it, in order that want of cash should not cause a postponement of the marriage. We will now classify and sketch some of the characters as they presented themselves in connection with the payment fees.

(a) MAKING PREMATURE PAYMENT.

Arthur was an aspiring youth and very decided in his determination to be married. His age was twenty-three. After authorising the banns to be published, the very next day, before the publication had been once made, he eased both his mind and his pocket by calling

again upon the writer and asking a special favour. Would we mind receiving the marriage fees then, as money was such a slippery thing, and so little of it slipped into his pocket, he would like to pay them, as he had the required sum in possession. The favour was granted, and he left with an assured conviction that his future marriage was secured. When a few more days had passed, so that he was within a fortnight of the wished-for day, he paid us visit number three, not to ask that the seven-and-sixpence might slip back into his pocket again, but to be allowed to make a further deposit. Since his last call he had reflected and had made another resolve, and that was to have his marriage certificate. Marriage certificates were very useful, they were gratifying documents to possess, and he would have his; he could then occasionally glance at it and feel certain that he was married; and as he then possessed the sum required for it he would like to pay for it, "in fear lest the money should be spent" on something more transient. He found us in an

obliging mood, so that this little whim was also yielded to, and he returned to his home with the assurance that he had done a very manly deed in securing a document of such interest and importance.

(b) PAYING FEES CHEERFULLY.

This is what might reasonably be expected of every groom, although experience teaches that all bridegrooms are not sufficiently reasonable to pay marriage fees cheerfully. Future divisions of this section will sufficiently show grooms of the parsimonious order are not rarities.

George thought as he was about to pay he would be funny and ask us a question. He said, "You don't trust, do ye?" No, George, it would not be advisable to encourage young persons to make so objectionable an entry into married life. Young people are, as a rule, sadly thoughtless and improvident, and the reducing or postponing payment of marriage fees would only encourage them in it. To make his friends smile was the real object of

George's question, and the effect it had was as he had anticipated.

James and his bride were each in their fifty-fifth year, and both had been married before. Both were in excellent spirits. The groom's were in such full glow that they led him cheerfully to add sixpence to the customary fees, and so to forget the respect due to his bride's feelings as to say, when presenting the money, that he hoped when he came again he should be able to give more! This remark reached the attentive ear of the bride, and James instantly discovered that his apology for his sixpenny present had not been expressed in the happiest style, suited to so special an occasion; he saw that he had unintentionally "set his foot in it." His bride, as though she imagined by his remark the groom had fixed an early date for her departure, said to him, "Why, you don't want to get rid of me so soon, do ye?"

Robert, before moving from the spot on which he had plighted his troth, turned to us, and with a smile, very rudely said, "I suppose you now want the sugar?"

(c) PRETENDING THE BRIDE WAS NOT WORTH
THE COST.

Robert was one of the ninny-hammers who thought something funny ought to be said over the marriage fees. The specimen he gave us of his wit was abominably poor, and instead of amusing it rather irritated his bride. Whilst drawing the money in dribblets from his pocket he said to the bride, who was watching him, "Seven-and-six is more than you're worth; I won't have you now." She replied sarcastically, "Well, I wouldn't." Whilst he was slowly gathering the requisite coins together she felt ashamed of the exhibition, and took the opportunity of twitting him by saying, "You *have* brought a little money; I suppose you were afraid to spend it in waste."

Robert was one who tried to be jocular, and show how thoroughly happy and contented he was. He was a light-hearted young fellow, and when he laid the fees upon the vestry table he said, "That's the worst seven-and-six I've spent in my life." A very poor kind of joke, and hardly recognisable as a joke upon

paper. But his friends, who heard and saw him, fully understood and highly appreciated the remark.

(*d*) PAYING FEES GRUDGINGLY.

When James was transformed into a husband he appraised the services of the minister and clerk at seven shillings, and laid that sum upon the vestry table. When told that he must pay the usual fee he declined to do it, and had the temerity, in the presence of the bride, to say, "Then you must unmarry us again if you want any more!" Could we, however, have taken him at his word, we believe the loss his bride would have sustained would have been a small one; we fear she found him a poor acquisition. His father came to the rescue and paid the remaining sixpence. Either James possessed seven-and-six or he did not; if not, then it was disgraceful improvidence to get married under such conditions.

(*e*) ASKING TO HAVE A PORTION RETURNED.

Henry was one who leaned upon the broken reed, "luck." His years were forty-three.

When he paid the marriage fees he said, "That's all the money I've got. S'pose you don't give anything out for luck?" Supposing he had received the whole sum back again, what "luck" could he expect would follow his thoughtless and injudicious plunging into fresh responsibilities? What right had he to think that smiling "luck" would attend such reckless proceedings? A daily struggle for existence was much more probable.

(f) OFFERING INSUFFICIENT SUMS.

The same degree of generosity was shown by W. at his marriage. When the time for the payment of fees had arrived he avoided the practice of the unpolished plebeian, who finds pleasure in displaying his coins upon the table, and adopted the semblance of respectability. As "the upper middle," for instance, usually slip an honorarium (sometimes a small piece of gold) into our hand in a private, unobtrusive manner, so W., *in appearance*, did the same. But when we ventured to look at the treasure we had received in so encou-

raging a manner, we found that we had been rewarded with a shilling ! The clergyman nothing ! Finding that this liberal groom was contented with this munificence, and was preparing to depart under a false impression, not only did his mind receive from us enlightenment, but his pocket also to the tune of six-and-sixpence more. Having thus been brought down to the plebeian level, from which apparently he had risen, he was allowed to depart with his bride and friends.

(g) GROOMS BORROWING MONEY.

It is surprising with what light - hearted indifference many young men plunge themselves into difficulties by undertaking responsibilities beyond their incomes. E. was so unadvised and inconsiderate as to decide upon being married at a time when his means were permanently low, and the result was that the very last thing that a bridegroom should have to do proved to be the first thing E. had to resort to after making matrimonial vows. The three half-crowns required for marriage

fees he was unprovided with, and he had to appeal to his friends for aid. The deep searching of pockets that was made by all three of them, the bride being one, before the sum was raised, proved that money with the entire party was a scarce commodity. The anxiety shown by all during the process was great, lest the grand total should not be raised, and the relief that accompanied success was proportionate.

(h) ECCENTRICITIES IN PAYMENT.

A few bridegrooms have found pleasure in indulging in little whimsicalities in connection with the payment of their marriage fees. Joseph, for instance, would not depend upon what his friends might do in the way of throwing old slippers after him and his bride for luck;¹ he would himself endeavour to ensure the propitious aid of an old slipper by introducing it into

¹ Throwing the slipper after the bride was a Saxon usage, to denote that the authority under which she lived in her old home has been transferred to the master of the house to which she is migrating. The act indicates the desire for good luck.

his marriage formalities. So before leaving home, in addition to requisites in connection with the ceremony, he placed an old slipper in his pocket—not for the purpose of being himself the first to throw the propitious symbol after his own bride, but to give expression to those good wishes by using it in his own way. When the time for the payment of the fee arrived, he withdrew the old slipper from his pocket, placed the seven-and-sixpence within it, and passed it to us with the coins snugly hidden at the further end.

Joseph's little freak with the slipper gave him and his friends amusement, and there was nothing in it that we could reasonably object to. But it was otherwise with the method adopted by Albert to invoke "good luck" upon the money spent in fees. The plan he pursued was the vulgar and very disgusting one of spitting upon the money!

The whim that Lewis indulged in was to pay both the banns fees and the marriage fees in threepenny pieces.

Richard was thirty years of age before he

obtained a bride; and he then seemed perfectly willing to get one "on the cheap." When the particular moment had arrived that gave him the opportunity of showing how sensible he was of, and how highly he prized, the services which had been rendered him, by putting his hand into his pocket, and, with the cheerfulness of a free-will offering, producing the seven-and-six, he, instead of doing this, gave his arm to his bride, and, with his party, commenced, what rude Americans are prone to describe as a "skedaddling" movement. We were unable to look upon so froward a movement with any degree of satisfaction, and felt compelled to arrest it, by reminding the defaulting groom that "there are fees to pay." With coolness he replied, "I thought there was something." Yet he was marching off and leaving nothing.

L. demeaned himself by burdening his pocket with five shillings worth of bronze.

(i) BRIDES PRESUMPTIVE.

Within the limited confines of a church vestry

much at various times may be learned by careful and attentive observation, as object lessons are unconsciously and truthfully presented. It has, for example, been instructive to observe the manner in which some brides have illustrated their appreciation of the view of obedience they had just promised to their husbands.

Such an exemplification was given by C., a young woman aged twenty. When her husband, who had attained the age of twenty-two, withdrew his purse from his pocket for the purpose of defraying the expenses he had just incurred, she, lamentably misunderstanding her position, with an air of presumed authority, immediately took it out of his hand, without the formality of asking his permission, and took seven-and-sixpence from it, paid the fees, then closed the purse and placed it in her own pocket. The husband submitted quietly to these high-handed proceedings during the time the couple remained in the church. The sequel probably was of a less tranquil character.

I. was a widow bride, with a tendency to rule ; and so full of activity, that when her

bachelor groom produced his purse she took it hastily from him, to his evident surprise and displeasure. This insult to his manhood he would not submit to, so he immediately obtained re-possession. Then with the calmness of one in possession of his restored rights, he recommenced counting the required seven-and-six. But before completing it, his high-spirited bride, profiting nothing by the stern rebuke she had received, seized the purse a second time, and showed a decided inclination to retain it, but this he would not allow, but made her, before leaving the vestry, yield it up.

(j) ASKING FOR A RECEIPT.

The practical experience of London life was not lost upon W. He had gained much knowledge of the world and its ways while living in the million-peopled city. He had learned, among other things, that it was advisable not to rush into matrimony too soon. In fact, he waited until he was nearly forty before he took to himself a wife, and when paying the fees for so doing his business habits did not forsake

him. Receipt for money paid was a necessary rule in mercantile life ; and he was now paying money to one who *might* be a rogue, and in his roguishness send him in a bill some day for seven-and-six. Without a receipt, would he not be in a dreadful fix ? He would have nothing to show that he had already paid. So he was careful to inquire, "Do I have a receipt for the fees ?" "Yes," we replied, directing his attention to his bride, "the *best* one you could have." The bride smilingly accepted the compliment, and prudent W. wisely assumed a look of satisfaction.

SECTION XXXVIII

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES

“He that lives and serves his bride,
In truth achieves two ends ;
For while her wish he pleases most,
So he himself befriends.”

AFTER the completion of the marriage ceremonial, the first request that many brides make to the husband is that he should obtain the “marriage lines.” He does wisely by yielding to this wish, as he is not only pleasing his bride, who will feel great satisfaction in possessing the little document, but is able at that time to obtain it at less cost than at any subsequent period. Nor is this all. Marriage certificates do more than satisfy personal whims—in the stern business of life they have to be presented on various occasions. The request of the bride,

however, is more often made than complied with. The finances of bridegrooms are not all in so flourishing a state as it is advisable they should be. Many bridegrooms possess more love than money, and some are somewhat lacking in both. In the ears of such "gentlemen" the request falls flat, and meets with no gratifying response. Other grooms have been well supplied with money, and have been loth to part with it, thinking that they had already spent enough on paying three half-crowns for marriage fees. Of this class, some have afterwards regretted the decision they came to, having then to procure the legal document at higher cost.

Two months after marriage L. came to obtain her marriage certificate, and for some reason or other avoided saying it was her own that she required. When asked the bride's name, she replied, "I don't know what her name was, I only know it was Amelia." When were they married was next asked, and she said, "I don't know." She was then told that some one must come who was able to

give the required information, that we might know in what year to search for it. She then made known that "it was about two months ago." "Then you do know the time it took place?" "Yes." And then acknowledged that it was her own marriage certificate that she wanted. We draw a veil over the remarks that followed, and hope that lying, so utterly meaningless, will never again be heard from her.

Elizabeth was another extraordinary specimen. She was forty-one years of age, and had been married twenty years when she required her marriage certificate. Respecting the date of her marriage she could give no definite information. "You've got it in your book," she said, and seemed to think that fact quite sufficient. She was then told there are thousands of marriages recorded in our registers, and that it was necessary to give us some idea as to the time she was married. How many years was it ago? She thought it must be twelve or thirteen years ago. What time of the year was it?—Christmas-time or in summer? She

could not say—all she could remember was that it was cold weather, and there was snow upon the ground. On these uncertain data a vain search was made. When she called again the entry had not been found. As no further light had dawned upon her mind, she found it necessary to seek information from her mother. The old lady consulted the domestic time-table—the time of the birth of sundry children—and by its aid ascertained that the event must have happened quite twenty years ago. A second search proved this calculation to be correct. Elizabeth had been married twenty years on December the twenty-third—only two days before Christmas Day ; yet she had forgotten at what time of the year it was !

SECTION XXXIX

RE-MARRIAGE

“Lighter than air, Hope’s summer visions die ;
If but a fleeting cloud obscure the sky,
If but a beam of sober reason play,
Lo ! fancy’s frost-work slowly melts away.”

ROGERS.

IN by-gone years when loving couples, yearning for marriage, stealthily departed from their homes and proceeded post-haste to Gretna Green, there to be joined together by a blacksmith or some other unsatisfactory individual, many, if not most of them, gained their purpose. But in cooler and more reflective moments some of them felt dissatisfied with the hasty, irregular and irreverent proceeding ; and, to ease their own minds and consciences, as well as to satisfy their friends, not

only determined to be, but were, married in an orthodox manner by clergymen in their own parish churches. Such exciting arrivals at Gretna Green have long since ceased. Gretna Green no longer woos love-sick couples. The blacksmith and his coadjutors have lost their employment; their love-linking occupation is gone; and no re-marriages of couples now take place who were abruptly joined together there.

However, among the thousands who were married in the writer's presence, were certain couples who were thus being re-married after going through a marriage service in Roman Catholic or in Dissenting chapels; and some after being legally linked together in Register Offices by a process that need not exceed, but may be completed in, the space of three minutes: in fact, the old Gretna Green blacksmiths could not have been more expeditious.

The following is the procedure in the Register Office. After the presentation of the certificate, each of the parties declares as follows: "I do solemnly declare that I know

not of any lawful impediment why I (naming himself or herself) may not be joined in matrimony to (naming the other party)." And each of the parties must also say to the other: "I call upon these persons here present to witness that I (naming himself or herself) do take thee (naming the other party) to be my lawful wedded (wife or husband)." The ring is then placed on the finger, and the "job" is done.

The surprise of some who have found themselves suddenly transformed into wives before they scarcely knew where they were, and had fully realised what they were doing, has been great. When the brief proceeding has terminated, the question has been asked in a tone of unsatisfied astonishment, "Is that all?" "Am I married?" A young woman one morning walked quietly out of her home in a casual manner unnoticed by her parents, and, after she had been absent a short time, sent a note to her mother by the hand of a messenger. On opening the note her mother was staggered by reading the laconic statement, "Dear Mother, I am married."

When married couples desire a second marriage service, it indicates that however contented they may at the time have been with the first service or performance, one or the other has become dissatisfied with it, and seeks contentment in a Church of England service. Or it may be the desire proves that the first tying of the nuptial knot, was not engaged in *con amore* by both groom and bride. Be the cause of the wish for a duplicate service what it may, the after service is more or less unsatisfactory, having been shorn by what has preceded it of the keen satisfaction it would otherwise have yielded.

SECTION XL

SUBSEQUENT INCIDENTS WITHIN THE HONEY- MOON

“ Happy the man, who sees a God employ’d
In all the good and ill that chequer life ! ”

THE great crisis over, the married pair are now in a state of readiness to receive and welcome the congratulations of their friends. For these, they usually have not long to wait. In many instances, the greetings have commenced ere the parties quitted the vestry. Some warm-hearted friends outside the immediate circle of the wedding-party have entered the vestry to be among the first to present their good wishes. But the more usual method at this early stage of the proceedings of showing good feeling, has been to await

their exit from the church porch, and then to strew flowers upon their pathway and greet them with showers of rice and confetti ; doing it with such good will, that it would be difficult to judge which derived the more gratification, the givers or the receivers. Amidst the enthusiasm of friends, goodly numbers have in this way entered upon their wedded life with joyous anticipations.

Several clergymen who were specially interested in young couples, and were asked by them to marry them, have provided themselves with a new Prayer Book, to use at the service ; and at the termination have written the bride's name in it and the date, and then, with a few kind words and good wishes, have presented it to her. This has been a pleasant and useful memento of the event.

A clergyman who ministered in a country village church, and who came for the special purpose of marrying a young woman whom he had long known, and had great respect for, presented an unusual appearance on arriving at the church, being the bearer of sundry

brown-paper parcels. These he deposited in the vestry ; and it was not until after the service was completed and the young people were about to leave, that the contents were revealed. They were wedding presents. From parcel number one was taken a large Bible ; this was the reverend gentleman's own gift, and its presentation was accompanied with appropriate advice. When the wrapping was removed from parcel number two, a substantial tea-caddy was seen. This was from the clergyman's wife, and, with wishes for true happiness, was in her name presented to the bride. The third parcel was small and unpretentious. It contained a pair of sugar-tongs that had been sent by another friend.

A wedding day without excitement would be a very tame affair, and it would be an indication that something was wrong somewhere. Excitement is expected, and excitement within proper limits there should be. This, of course, was fully understood by W., and his bridal party, and the joyous event had its due effect upon them. In the best of spirits they were

returning from church, in a carriage engaged for the purpose ; when, suddenly, they were plunged into a degree of excitement they had not expected, and were quite unprepared for. In a most unpleasant way their progress was checked, and they came to a standstill in an abrupt manner. A catastrophe had happened ! The carriage had capsized, and the party were more than excited, they had become alarmed—and very much mixed inside the overturned vehicle. They were found to be quite full of bewildered excitement as they were withdrawn one by one through the window. It was a rough commencement of wedded life. Fortunately they escaped without receiving any particular injury. The startling incident made a memorable addition to the events of the day.

The joys that, by general consent, belong to the honeymoon, are not experienced by all. We have known many who have found it a chequered period, and will here relate a few instances. On the day after his marriage A. was seriously injured by a gas explosion. B.

in the first week of his married life sprained one of his legs, and was disabled for three months. On the fourth day after his nuptials C., a young man in a respectable position in life, was overtaken by illness, and for weeks appeared to be hovering on the verge of the grave, but ultimately recovered. On the fifteenth day after marriage D. entered the same church as a mourner, following to the grave his father, who had been present, and was one of the merriest individuals in the marriage party. E. was an elderly man, who, immediately after his third marriage, underwent a startling experience. In sixty-two hours after the betrothal he was a widower again! On the wedding-day his bride looked hearty and well. Her death was attributed to heart disease. F., sixteen days after his marriage, was seized with a violent fit of coughing, lingered a few days and then expired. G. went on a sea voyage on the fifth day after his wedding, and long before his honeymoon had run its course he was drowned. H. was another of our bridegrooms who did

not outlive his honeymoon. On the twenty-third day after marriage he was drowned, and his wife became a widow at eighteen years of age! In December I. was a bridegroom, and in the next month was carried to his grave.

Other instances of joyless honeymoons could be given, but as the troubles were brought about by disreputable conduct—the fruit of their own evil doings—we draw a veil over the unhappy experience of some of our married couples, and hastily bring the section to a close.

SECTION XLI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

“ Marriage Love’s object is : at whose bright eyes
He lights his torches, and calls them his skies,
For her he wings his shoulders, and doth fly
To her white bosom as his sanctuary.
She makes him smile in sorrows, and doth stand
’Twixt him and all wants with her silver hand ;
In her soft looks his tender feet are tied,
And in his fetters he takes worthy pride.”

B. JONSON.

THE marriage service we have been considering is essentially one of blessing. The words *bless*, *blessing*, *blessed*, occur no less than sixteen times in the devotional portion that precedes the closing Scriptural address. In this particular it fully accords with the original institution. Marriage was divinely arranged

for the well-being of mankind ; and when rightly used it has throughout the ages met man's real wants, and proved a true blessing. Some men, however, have imagined that they have discovered something that is better and more congenial and suited to their depraved inclinations ; and the New Woman, on the other hand, in her arrogance and conceit, has raised a feeble cry against it. Yet in spite of all opposition at various times and in divers manners it rests, like the Sabbath or Lord's Day, not upon man's whims or inclinations or women's likes and dislikes ; not upon the Church of England or on any other Church ; but upon an everlasting foundation, having the Eternal God as its Author ; and it has resisted, and will resist, the stoutest assaults that have been, or may be made upon it.

Holy matrimony is an honourable state of life. It bears the stamp of divinity. It was ordained by the Creator at the beginning of man's history, as recorded in the opening pages of the Word of God ; and was honoured by our Saviour in a special manner, at the com-

mencement of His public ministry. He not merely attended a marriage feast, but while present He commenced His series of wondrous miracles. We therefore have the most decisive proof that marriage has the favour of God's approbation. And we may rest assured that when entered upon in a proper manner, and its vows faithfully kept, it possesses powers, capabilities, and influences that are, when rightly exercised, conducive in the highest degree to the happiness of the individual and the well-being of the human race.

But, like every other blessing placed within the reach of man for his use and his happiness, marriage has felt and suffered from the withering touch of sin's defilement. Its inherent blessings have been marred, and it has been by many despoiled of its purest joys, and highest influences. Multitudes have by bitter experience found that marriage affords no exception to the general rule; that a blessing, when abused, ultimately becomes transformed into a curse.

Knowing these to be verities, that will only

be disputed by carping critics who love to cavil and revel in doing so, is it not deplorable to see the multitudes who enter upon matrimony in the most careless and inconsiderate manner? Present gratification, with an utter disregard of future consequences, is all that many persons think of or care about. The far-reaching effects of marriage scarcely cost them a single anxious thought. Large numbers get married with as little serious care and reflection as they think it necessary to bestow upon the choice of a garment, the acceptance of a situation, or the selection of a house to live in. Many foolishly think that they have only to be married, and they will be "all right" the remainder of their lives; that circumstances will somehow or other tumble into pleasantness, if they only wait and let them. Such venturesome individuals often experience bitter disappointment when it is too late to remedy it. Then, instead of blaming themselves for their own rashness and folly, they ridiculously declare that marriage is a failure. They are the failures! and it would be a wondrous thing

did not marriage as well as other matters prove a failure with them.

“ The ill-matched couple fret and fume,
And thus, in strife themselves consume,
Or from each other wildly start,
And with a noise for ever part.”

The exercise of common sense is extremely useful in all matrimonial affairs. It not only can be used beneficially when engaged in the momentous matter of selecting and deciding upon a partner, but will be found helpful amid the smiling flatteries of the honeymoon and the subsequent realities of this storm-tossed life. There is excellent discretion in not choosing your wife solely for the beauty of her external appearance, as something, indeed, a great deal more than a handsome face, an elegant figure and idle chatter, which merely amuse at the moment, is needed for a lifelong companionship. Imitate the Vicar of Wakefield, and select your wife, as he did, “ for such qualities that will wear well.” Show your own wisdom by preferring good sense to good looks. Beauty soon wears out ; but good sense, un-

selfishness, and loving sympathy in a wife are a precious possession, and they grow with years. If you find these virtues linked with beauty, do your best to secure the estimable prize; but if the choice lies between them and beauty, let the vanishing quantity alone, and choose a lady who will be likely to share your cares, and double your joys; who will be able to manage your household affairs with good judgment, and with economy; who will find her chief happiness in religion and virtue, and take the liveliest interest in her domestic duties. There is no lack of women in the world; there are plenty of ladies to select from—ladies who would make the best of wives. The best are apt to be of a retiring disposition, and keep in the background. They are the ones worth seeking for. Dressed-up dolls come forth in abundance; you may meet with them any day, and in greater numbers upon the first day of the week. Vain, foolish, empty-headed women, who would be dear at any price, can be obtained anywhere. Be careful! Don't be drawn into the snare

by showy dress, fascinating looks, and outward allurements. Be real yourself, and try to obtain a real helper.

To make marriage a success and a blessing, you must lay a good foundation ; it is essential that a suitable partner be selected. When this has been done and the bond has been sealed, self-sacrificing love must be the basis of the union. Perfect trust and faithfulness must coexist ; then each partner will be ready and able to bear his or her due and proper share of the burdens and troubles of life, as well as partake in the joys. Each will maintain a proper position in the home. The wife will not usurp authority over her husband, the husband will not slight and become weary of his wife. The duties the new relationship has brought upon the newly married couple will be cheerfully and readily performed, and their home will be one of tranquil happiness, be their position in life what it may.

“True friends help each other : gladly give and take,
Bear with one another, for sweet friendship’s sake,
E’en when parted, always love each other still :
Both in joy and sorrow, sharing good and ill.

Onward in life's journey, clasping hand in hand ;
Thus they seek together friendship's native land,
Happy home where Jesus, best and truest friend,
Waits for Christian pilgrims at their journey's end."¹

Marriage should be entered upon carefully thoughtfully, courageously, and prayerfully both by husband and wife ; then, though it may not fulfil their dreams of bliss, it will be found to be surcharged with noblest uses and real blessings.

Before making our farewell bow, we ask permission to whisper a few plain and important hints that we are inclined to believe will be worth attention. In the first instance, we ask the attention of young men.

(a) TO YOUNG MEN.

Don't neglect prayer for Divine guidance that you may be able to select and obtain a partner for life, who would prove a real helper and blessing to you. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."—PROVERBS iii. 6.

¹ "The Children's Hymn Book," S.P.C.K. Seeley and Co.

Don't take a leap in the dark, look well before you leap.

Don't, if you are, or hope to become, a "new man in Christ," give any countenance to a New Woman in bloomers.

Don't, if you desire a happy and prosperous wedded life, become attached to a gadding, flirting, dressing, pleasure-loving woman.

Don't let beauty or money be the chief consideration, but rather let suitable character, agreeable disposition, and adaptability to your station in life guide your choice, and seal your decision.

Don't marry for money, but for love.

Don't allow the period of your courtship to be a time of mutual deception.

Don't marry before you can afford to do so.

Don't marry a woman old enough to be your mother.

Don't reject good advice with the flippant remark, "It's all rot. Every fellow knows best what he ought to do." When every fellow *does* what is best, good suggestions will no longer be needed.

Don't be one of those who say, "Love matters are so different to everything else, that no man, however wise he may think himself, can advise another in so personal a matter." He that will not be saved needs no preacher.

(b) TO YOUNG MARRIED MEN.

Don't live beyond your means, but from the commencement of your married life "cut your coat according to your cloth." Be satisfied with commencing housekeeping on a small scale.

Don't begin where your parents ended.

Don't fail to trust your wife implicitly, and she in like manner will trust you.

Don't let your wife have the whole authority of your household in her own hands.

Don't forget that you must do your best to keep the love you gained before.

Don't forget that your wife has feelings, and that the lover-like attentions given before marriage are equally acceptable, and equally needed, in married life.

Don't interfere unduly in domestic matters. Let your wife be the queen of your home, ruling in her department, as you do in yours.

Don't yield to selfishness, but remember that wedded love means mutual sacrifice.

Don't expect perfection in your wife ; but remember she has not found perfection in her husband.

Don't be silly by expecting too much from your wife, or one day you may be heard whining, "I find this life a failure."

Don't forget that the rich man is not so much he who has "heaps of money," as the man who lives within his income, is free from debt, and is happy with what he possesses.

(c) TO YOUNG MAIDENS.

Don't put on a garb for courtship, that will not stand the wear and tear of married life.

Don't marry at all if you have reason to believe that your tastes and temperament will unfit you for finding pleasure in wifely and maternal duties.

Don't endeavour to attract the attention

of young men towards you by fine dress and forwardness of manners. She that daubs herself with honey will have plenty of flies buzzing about her ; and may possibly get stung by a wasp.

Don't defer the learning of housekeeping until after you are married. Remember that nothing can come out of a sack but what is in it.

Don't let your choice be decided by fussy friends or imprudent parents.

Don't marry a man you do not, and cannot love.

Don't wait until after marriage to find out your husband's character.

Don't expect more from marriage than it, or any other state of life will bring.

Don't, when *the* great question is put, say "No," if you really mean "Yes." It is risky (to say the least) as some men would accept such an answer as final ; not believing that so plain a negative can mean acquiescence in so important a matter.

Don't be headstrong and reject the good counsel of your well-wishers, or you may in after years have occasion to repent bitterly.

Don't slight the advice given in 2 Cor. vi. 14,
"Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers."

(d) TO NEWLY MARRIED WIVES.

Don't allow your courtship to end at marriage, but let it sweeten your after-life.

Don't neglect your personal appearance.

Don't forget that as before marriage you had to win the love of your husband, so now you must do your best to keep it.

Don't give yourself airs.

Don't forget that man always has been, and will continue to be, the head of the family.

Don't expect perpetual sunshine.

Don't forget to be your husband's friend.

Don't be governed by Pride, Passion, and Perversity; but rather let Patience, Perseverance, and Piety shine forth in you.

Don't fail to be agreeable to your husband's friends.

Don't make known the private matters of your home to your companions and acquaintances.

Don't protest against your husband's small

whims and peculiarities, but yield to them as far as possible.

Don't "nag" your husband when he does little things you may not approve, or, by degrees, your wedding ring may become a fetter.

Don't, as time rolls on, withdraw your love and affection from your husband, and lavish it all on your children.

Now, a word to all our youthful readers from the pages of Sterne (Sermons, Vol. iv. p. 11): "Listen, I pray you, to the stories of the disappointed in marriage: collect all their complaints: hear their mutual reproaches: upon what fatal hinge do the greatest part of them turn? 'They were mistaken in the person.' Some disguise, either of body or mind, is seen through in the first domestic scuffle: some fair ornament, perhaps the very one which won the heart, *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, falls off. 'It is not the Rachel for whom I served, why hast thou beguiled me?'

"Be open, be honest; give yourself for what

you are ; conceal nothing, varnish nothing, and if these fair weapons will not do, better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day. If the heart beguiles itself in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of flesh and blood ; when the dream is over, and we awake, it matters little whether 'tis Rachel or Leah, be the object what it will, as it must be on the earthly side, at least, of perfection, it will fall short of the work of fancy, whose existence is in the clouds."

Those, who in the matter of their marriage placed themselves in their Heavenly Father's hand, and have reason to believe they have followed His guidance, may appropriate the words of *Klingle*, and say—

" We go,
Led by His shielding hand, and know
He will not make,
Except for love's sweet sake,
A single day
Shadowed along life's lonely way."



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